

# 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.



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## Notes on Contributors

**Mark Baker** is a member of the Sharing Education Implementation team at Queen's University Belfast. His current interests are in the use of online collaboration in the building of relationships and collaboration in divided communities.

**Paula Devine** is Research Director of ARK, and is based in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast. She is coordinator of the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey.

**Tony Gallagher** is a Professor of Education at Queen's University and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Planning, Staffing and External Affairs. His main research interests lie in the role of education in divided societies and he is interested in equity issues in education more generally. Currently he is leading the Shared Education Programme, a major research and development project promoting collaborative networking among schools.

**Ken Harland** is a lecturer in Community Youth Work and Co-Director and co-founder of the Centre for Young Men's Studies. **Sam McCready** is a Senior Lecturer in Community Youth Work and Co-Director and co-founder of the Centre for Young Men's Studies. Their research history focuses on working with young men around the themes of masculinity, violence, mental health and youth work practice. They are currently involved in a 5 year longitudinal study funded the Department of Education and the Northern Ireland Office with 11 – 16 year old males exploring post primary school educational experiences.

**Peter Johnson** is a Teaching Fellow in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queen's University, Belfast. His research interests include teenage selfhood, Goffmanian interpretive sociology and underage drinking within Northern Irish society.

**Brian Lambkin** is Director of the Centre for Migration Studies at the Ulster-American Folk Park, Omagh and former Principal of Lagan College, Belfast. He is the author of *Opposite Religions Still? Interpreting Northern Ireland After the Conflict* (Avebury, 1996), joint author with Patrick Fitzgerald of *Migration in Irish History, 1607-2007* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) and currently Chairman of the Association of European Migration Institutions.

**Madeleine Leonard** is a Professor of Sociology at Queen's University, Belfast. Her main research interest is in teenagers' experiences of growing up in politically sensitive societies and she has been researching the perceptions and experiences of Catholic and Protestant teenagers living in interface areas in North Belfast. She has recently extended this research interest to Cyprus where she has carried out research on Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot teenagers' attitudes and experiences of growing up in the divided city of Nicosia. She is currently researching teenagers' perceptions and experiences of Belfast as a 'shared city' as part of an ESRC project 'Conflict in Cities and the Contested State' - [www.conflictincities.org](http://www.conflictincities.org) She has used a range of research methodologies including writing exercises, maps, photo prompts and focus group interviews.

**Jacqueline Lockhart** is secretary to the Sharing Education Programme (S.E.P.) Implementation Team. She has worked in Queens University for over 8 years, over 6 of those years as research secretary for the Early Years Enriched Curriculum Evaluation Project (E.Y.E.C.E.P.) in the School of Psychology.

**Sam McCready** see Harland above for details

**Martina McKnight** is a research assistant in Queen's University Belfast. She is working on an ESRC funded project Conflict in Cities and the Contested State and her research interests include gender, young people and religion.

**Dirk Schubotz** is Young Life and Times Director with ARK and is based in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast. He has undertaken research on a range of issues related to young people, such as mental and sexual health, community relations and education. Dirk is actively involved in promoting participatory research methods.

**Alistair Stewart** has been a member of the SEP Implementation Team since February 2007. He works closely with the participating schools in the SEP and as a result has acquired an in-depth knowledge of the challenges that collaborative projects can face.

**Richard Walker** is an External Affairs Officer for Queen's University Belfast and has managed the Sharing Education Programme (SEP) since its launch in 2007. The SEP aims to encourage schools to make cross-sectoral collaborations an integral part of school life in Northern Ireland.

## Growing Up in a Divided Society

This issue of *Shared Space* has been compiled and edited by Professor Madeleine Leonard and Dr Martina McKnight of the School of Sociology at Queen's University, Belfast. The articles are based on some of the papers presented at a conference held at the university in June 2010 on 'Growing Up in Divided Societies'.

The articles chosen have a particular relevance for community relations in Northern Ireland and in particular reflect the challenge for young people in a society coming out of conflict. The article by Paula Devine and Dirk Schubotz, based on the work of ARK's Life and Times Survey, reviews recent trends in this annual attitude survey. Although the overall trend reflects an optimistic view of community relations, and only a minority of people prefer segregation to sharing, the authors highlight the fact that young people hold a more pessimistic view than adults and express stronger segregation preferences. The article explores some of the factors which might contribute to this. Attitudes are changing however and the authors note the growth in allegiances beyond the traditional British-Irish divide among young people and a more favourable attitude to minority ethnic groups.

Teenagers' perceptions of Belfast as a divided and/or shared city is the subject of Madeleine Leonard and Martina McKnight's article. Initial analysis of their research suggests grounds for cautious optimism that traditional ethno-nationalist identity is becoming less dominant in the experience of young people, as other fears and concerns were expressed, particularly the negative attitudes to them from adults in general. Nonetheless the traditional dispositions remain resilient in young people despite the peace process, and the authors note the particular need to pay attention to the ongoing segregation of localities and the education system.

Sectarianism permeates Northern Ireland at a personal, social, political and economic level, but, as Peter Johnson states in his article on 'Drinking in divided societies', when conducting research within Northern Ireland it seems necessary to evaluate the extent to which the wider socio-political climate may intrude into the social issue under investigation. The problem and experience of underage drinking is not unique to Northern Ireland and, although a sectarian imprint is evident, particularly in identifying where it is 'safe' for a young person to drink, there are other youth sub-cultures at work and it is also apparent that young people have a shared sense of exclusion from the adult world.

The article by Ken Harland and Sam McCready from the Centre for Young Men's Studies reveals that the relationship between violence and personal safety continues to be critical to many young men's everyday lives. Researching attitudes among young men across Northern Ireland, but primarily from areas with the highest levels of poverty and deprivation, the authors found that sectarian divisions were still strong between Catholics and Protestants and that there was little experience of positive cross-community contact. The majority experienced a mixture of excitement and fear with regard to violence. The authors propose some useful and practical suggestions for action to help young men participate more actively in their communities and contribute to the peace process.

De facto religious segregation in the education system in Northern Ireland has long been a subject of debate in the context of building better community relations. Initiatives by educators to help mitigate sectarian divisions among young people have ranged from curriculum development, cross-community contact schemes and the development of integrated schools. The impact of these initiatives has been mixed. A fourth strategic initiative, the Sharing Education Programme, is outlined by Professor Tony Gallagher and et al. By establishing collaborative networks and exploring models of collaboration between schools the programme seeks as a long term outcome to promote reconciliation based on practical co-operation. While the project is still at an early stage, at the end of the first three years the survey data collected so far suggests that teachers and students are very positive about the benefits. The challenge will be to explore whether the initiative can be sustained and extended across the education system as a whole.

The final article is by Brian Lambkin in which he explores the concept of migration as a way of 'Dealing with the Past' as an unresolved issue of the Northern Ireland peace process. He outlines a new approach to migration and considers the opportunity it offers to the teaching of history in schools. In particular he examines a recent project by the museums, libraries and archives service aimed at an integrated presentation of their collections, based on application of the new migration framework, and setting recent conflict and its resolution in deeper historical perspective. This will help inform young people about the choices they need to make if they are to migrate on their own journey from a still-divided society to the new world of a post-conflict 'shared future'.

**Ray Mullan**

*Series Editor*

November 2010

## Introduction

We would like to thank the Community Relations Council for enabling us to use this issue of *Shared Space* to present six papers based on presentations given at a conference held in Queen's University in June 2010 entitled 'Growing up in Divided Societies'. This multi-disciplinary conference was part of The Research Forum for the Child at Queen's University, Belfast ([www.qub.ac.uk/child](http://www.qub.ac.uk/child)), Annual Conference series and we would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Dr Spyros Spyrou, Director of the Centre for the Study of Childhood and Adolescence at the European University, Cyprus.

The conference brought together over seventy scholars from several countries. While a central theme of the conference was the experiences and perceptions of children growing up in ethnically and politically divided societies the presentations clearly illustrated the importance of appreciating the range of divisions that impact on the everyday lives and life chances of young people growing up today. The speakers sought to challenge simplistic notions of a homogenised version of childhood and/or adolescence highlighting instead the need to contextualise the lives of young people in time and place, recognising both constraints and agency. Moreover, in detailing the micro geographies of young people and giving voice to their often locally based narratives, the importance of placing these within wider macro changes occurring at societal, cultural, political or economic levels was evident and revealing. A number of contributors, while appreciating the need to be sensitive to young people's diverse everyday experiences, highlighted the continued relevance of poverty, class and gender in shaping attitudes, perceptions and life chances. These often interwoven structures created or reinforced physical, spatial and mental barriers that often bolstered a 'them' and 'us' mentality both within and between young people and between young people and adults.

While many of the papers focused on the situation in Northern Ireland there were also dynamic contributions from Cyprus, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Democratic Republic of Congo, Germany, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Palestine and Turkey. This issue of *Shared Space* includes six articles based on conference presentations that relate specifically to Northern Ireland. The papers collectively address on the one hand, the ongoing legacy of the 'troubles' on young people's everyday lives and on the other hand, the need to move beyond the traditional ethno-national divide in order to fully appreciate the range of issues that impact on growing up in Northern Ireland. A further selection of papers from the conference exploring

the experiences and perceptions of young people in The Democratic Republic of Congo, Canada, Lebanon, Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus and Northern Ireland will be published in a special issue of the International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy scheduled for publication in November, 2011.

We would also like to take this opportunity to publicise a forthcoming conference being held in Queen's University, Belfast from 19th – 21st May 2011 which we believe would be of interest to the readers of Shared Space. This multi disciplinary international conference entitled 'Urban Conflicts: Ethno-National Divisions, States and Cities', full details of which can be found on <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/UrbanConflictsConference/>, will focus on the nature and dynamics of ethno-national conflicts as manifested in contested cities. It aims to enhance dialogue between academics and non-academic urban policy practitioners and community activists working in such contested cities. In relation to our ongoing research, upon which our paper included in this publication is based, we will be inviting the young people who participated in our research to attend an event at the conference on Friday May 20th wherein we will feedback our findings to them and give them the opportunity to question us, local policy makers and politicians. If you would like further details about this conference and if you would like to attend our report-back to young people you can email us as follows:

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