

Population Change and Social Inclusion Study, Derry/Londonderry¹

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Introduction

The overall aim of this paper is to provide a synthesis of a recent research project investigating perceived alienation and political marginalisation among the Protestant population of Derry/Londonderry. The object of the report was to produce an envisioning document that would establish the structures and policies needed to encourage new forms of co-operation and sharing in Derry/Londonderry. (As the name is itself contested, this circumlocution is used throughout the paper.) (The full report, which contains more discussion particularly of the promotion of conflict transformation, is available online².) The study employed a tripartite methodology including both quantitative and qualitative techniques: mapping of census data; a large-scale questionnaire survey of Protestant households; and a mixture of focus group meetings and semi-structured interviews.

Two contrasting trends emerged from the research. First, and despite certain caveats, it is evident that the demographic decline of the Protestant population has halted. The reduction in violence has also led to some re-engagement with the shopping areas located within Derry/Londonderry's Cityside. The majority of Protestants surveyed also work, and are content to do so, in predominantly Catholic workplaces. Many Protestants, around half, also socialise with non-Protestants on a regular basis. The vast majority of the survey respondents also recognise that they have not been direct victims of intimidation or other forms of hostility. Indeed over 80% stated that they had never been treated unfavourably, due to their religion, when shopping in predominantly Catholic places. However, around 1 in 10 suggested that they have been treated unfavourably.

Secondly, however, previous violence, the legacy of long-term population decline and political uncertainty has contributed to the reproduction of a strong sense of alienation and exclusion. Despite the halting of demographic decline and other positive trends, there remains a general mood of cultural and political uncertainty and discontentment. The overall context, therefore, is one of a powerful but complex sense of alienation and political marginalisation shared by the Protestant population of Derry/Londonderry.

The project points to the need of developing voices within the Protestant community that accept a duality between positive and negative circumstances. Many positive developments have been hidden or obscured by wider fears and hostilities. Similarly, the needs of the Protestant community must also be accepted as a consequence of demographic change, violence and political vulnerability. Conversely, nationalist/republican communities must recognise that there is merit in Protestant senses of insecurity and cultural and political decline.

Demography and Segregation

A common perception exists that the minority unionist/Protestant population within the Derry City Council Area (DCCA) is in perpetual decline as a result of a combination of out-migration and ageing. However, analysis of the most recent census data suggest that, for the first time since 1971, demographic decline amongst Protestants has halted (Tables 1 and 2). Compared to 1991, an additional 87 census respondents stated their religion as being Protestant in the 2001 census. Nearly a quarter of the population within the DCCA were designated as being from a Protestant community background³.

Table 1: 1991 Total & Proportional Figures

| 1991 | Religion |
|------------------|----------------|
| Total Population | 95,371 |
| Total Catholic | 66,251 (69.4%) |
| Total Protestant | 19,900 (20.9%) |

Table 2: 2001 Total & Proportional Figures

| 2001 | Religion | Community Background |
|------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Total Population | | |
| Total Catholic | 74,482 (70.9%) | 79,185 (75.4%) |
| Total Protestant | 19,987 (19.0%) | 24,369 (23.2%) |

However, the demographic spread of the population suggests a high level of segregation. For example, between 1971 and 1991 the Protestant population of the Cityside declined by 83.4%, a process that was matched by a 27% growth within the Protestant population of the Waterside. The growth of the Protestant population in the Waterside has generally been attributed, in the main, to this out-migration of Protestants from the Cityside. The catalyst for such out-migration was usually that of increased violence and a subsequent deterritorialisation of spatially vulnerable populations.

As shown in Table 3, 31.5% of those from a Protestant community background live in places that are over 80% Protestant while only 11.5% of those from a Protestant community background live in places that are over 80% Catholic. Persons from a Protestant community background are more likely than their Catholic counterparts to live in religiously mixed communities (Table 4). Indeed 83.1% of all Catholics, by community background, live in places that are over 80% Catholic.

Table 3: 2001 Protestant Segregation

| % Protestant Population Segregation Bands | (Community Background) % of Total Protestant Population in band: |
|---|---|
| 0-20 | 11.5% |
| 21-40 | 8.7% |
| 41-60 | 17.2% |
| 61-80 | 31.1% |
| 81-90 | 16.1% |
| 91-100 | 15.4% |

Table 4: 2001 Catholic Segregation

| % Catholic Population Segregation Bands | (Community Background) % of Total Catholic Population in band: |
|---|---|
| 0-20 | 1.4% |
| 21-40 | 3.8% |
| 41-60 | 4.6% |
| 61-80 | 7.1% |
| 81-90 | 10.6% |
| 91-100 | 72.5% |

Survey Findings

A total of 399 respondents participated in the questionnaire survey which was dedicated to examining the issues of segregation, cultural and political alienation and conflict amelioration within Derry/Londonderry. Of these 40.3% were males and 59.7% were females. The findings contain a mix of viewpoints and opinions, both positive and negative.

There was a comprehension of a new social context in Northern Ireland and, specifically, recognition of the benefits that have followed in the wake of the paramilitary cease-fires. Some of these findings include:

- A recognition of a greater willingness to shop in 'Catholic' places;
- Over 80% of respondents acknowledging that they had never been treated unfairly because of their religion within a shop or business premises located within a Catholic area;

- A majority of those of working age being prepared to work in predominantly Catholic workplaces;
- Notably, only a handful of respondents claimed that they had been subjected either to verbal or physical abuse in the city whether measured in the last 5 years or previous 25 years.

More contentious concerns were discovered around those questions relating to issues of political and cultural identity. The findings reveal a high percentage of Protestants who:

- Feel that their community is in a state of decline;
- Believe that segregation will continue;
- Uphold the notion that their cultural identity is both in decline and unprotected within the city;
- Interpret equality agendas as favouring the majority community within the DCCA area.

Evidently the more serious and negative emotions uncovered by the survey are based upon forms of resource competition, a sense of loss, and a perception of a culture voice remaining unheard. There is a strong sense of spatial decline which, despite the most recent census results, remains manifest. Furthermore, there is, as evidenced by qualitative evidence, a strong memory concerning the impact of violence in the 1970s and 1980s, which is firmly attached to the population exodus from the Cityside. In relation to the theme of segregation the following was observed:

- The vast majority of respondents (97%) stated that the Troubles were to blame for high levels of segregation;
- A distinct majority (87.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that segregation creates poor community relationships;
- Around half of respondents (52.6%) felt that housing policy aided the reproduction of segregation;
- Two-thirds of respondents (69.7%) believed that politicians should do more to create mixed housing areas;
- Virtually all of the respondents (93.2%) believed that 'Protestants feel safer living within predominantly Protestant places';
- Just over half of all respondents (51.0%) believed that their community does not want to share space with the 'other' community;

- Two thirds of all respondents (65.2%) also believed that the ‘other’ community wanted their community ‘to move out of the city’.

It is clear that significant numbers of respondents lacked confidence that their traditions are being protected. Respondents were twice as likely to disagree or strongly disagree than those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that ‘my own cultural tradition is protected in Londonderry these days’. Similarly there was a seven-fold disparity between those who agreed or strongly agreed (74.2%) and those who disagreed/strongly disagreed (10.5%) with the supposition: ‘my cultural tradition is always the underdog’. In addition:

- 82.2% of all respondents considered themselves to be British with Northern Irish the second-most common answer;
- 14.2% thought of themselves to be Northern Irish;
- 7.8% of all respondents claimed an Ulster identity;
- 4.0% preferred to be thought of as Irish with Ulster, Scottish and English each receiving between 1% and 2%.

A similar share of respondents believed (39.3% and 35.6% respectively) that relationships between Catholics and Protestants had improved over the past 5 years and would continue to improve over the next 5 years while, conversely, 16.4% believed that relations between the two communities worsened between 1998 and 2004. A similar share (15.2%) stated that they believed that these relationships would continue to deteriorate. In terms of equality and access to resources, 86.4% stated that Catholics receive better treatment in terms of housing and other social provision.

Respondents were also asked a series of questions about living within the DCCA. These covered topics ranging from: unionist political leadership; the unionist/Protestant community in Derry/Londonderry; relationships with the nationalist/Catholic community; the role of Derry City Council (DCC); and the future development of the city. Findings included:

- 53.4% of all respondents believed that nationalists and republicans had benefited a lot more than Protestants/unionists from the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement;
- 7% believed that Protestants/unionists had benefited a little more than nationalists and republicans;

- 29% believed that the Agreement is basically right but that the specifics need to be re-negotiated;
- 22% wanted the Agreement to be abandoned;
- Around 20% of all participants felt happy that the Agreement had made progress.

The issue of political leadership provided mixed views on whether unionist politicians are doing a good job of representing their respective constituencies. There was greater agreement that the ‘other side’ were not promoting equality. In sum:

- 41% believed that they were doing a good job;
- 35% disagree;
- 61% disagreed or disagreed strongly that politicians on the ‘other’ side are promoting equality within Derry/Londonderry.

The Protestant community’s position within the city also came into question. With regard to this:

- 72% of all respondents believed that the Protestant community is in population decline, despite the demographic evidence above;
- 80.3% agreed with the statement that ‘the Protestant community feels that it is in political decline’;
- Three quarters agreed/strongly agreed that ‘the unionist community in Londonderry has declined in cultural terms in recent years’;
- 67.9% believed that the Protestant community was in cultural decline;
- Only 3.7% of all respondents agreed that the Protestant community feels confident enough to move back to the Cityside;
- Over half (56%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that DCC actively supports all cultural identities;
- 71% believed that DCC has not done enough to quell unionist fears.

Respondents were asked whether they felt members of their own community were discriminated against when seeking work with 47.8%, 33.3% and 18.9% answering *yes*, *no* and *maybe* respectively. Forty percent of respondents also believed that socio-economic conditions have improved in their area since the 1994 cease-fires with 40.5% stating there has been no change in such conditions. Conversely, 14.7% held the opinion that conditions have worsened.

The majority of respondents (83.1%) either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that Protestants were reluctant to shop in Catholic areas prior to 1994. Two thirds now agree that Protestants are more likely to shop in Catholic places. A quarter of all respondents stated that they had been told by other Protestants 'to stay out of Catholic areas'. In addition:

- The vast majority (82.6%) of respondents stated that they have never been treated unfairly in a shop/business due to their religion;
- 61.0% work within predominantly Catholic workplaces;
- 59.9% would be content to work in predominantly Catholic workplaces.

Respondents were asked about entering public spaces or consumption arenas within the city. It was found that:

- 95% were prepared to visit Lisnagelvin Shopping Centre;
- 88.3% would be willing to use Lisnagelvin Leisure Centre;
- 83.3% would visit Foyleside;
- 80.8% would visit the Richmond Centre;
- 9.4% would not visit the Brandywell Football Stadium.

Finally, in the context of personal safety, respondents were asked about walking or travelling through their own community and that of the Catholic community and their perceptions are as follows:

- 19.1% of respondents stated that they either felt a little unsafe, scared or would not walk through their own community after dark;
- 79.9% stated that they would feel a little unsafe, scared, or would not walk through a Catholic area after dark.

Focus Group Findings

The cultural dimensions to Protestant alienation were explored largely through the focus groups. The city's name emerged as the critical factor. Almost without exception, Protestants emphasised the importance of this issue, which they consider vital to their sense of identity⁴. They see naming as the key test of the claims made by members of the nationalist community who argue that the city embraces the principle of inclusivity and respects the

cultural features of both identities. When the subject of the proposed name change was raised with one focus group, it became clear that the relatively tenuous identification which many Protestants have with the city would be put under even greater stress:

Yes we do identify although we do sort of feel that we're sort of strangers in our own place...but it'll be very difficult to identify if the name is changed, I would find it extremely difficult. As far as I'm concerned that's it, that's the formal denial of our Britishness.

There was a general perception that the weakness of political unionism at the level of local government meant that Protestant concerns with regard to equality issues remains problematic. Some Protestants felt that the template of equality embedded in the Belfast Agreement ought to apply to the issue of the city's name to the same extent as nationalists throughout Northern Ireland expect to have features of their cultural identity acknowledged as part of a politics of toleration and mutual respect. Protestants are alienated at the prospect of 'parity of esteem' being prejudicially interpreted by local nationalists to mean the sort of name change which makes no allowance for the prefix, 'London'.

To the intensity of this emotional and symbolic relevance of the city's name to Protestants can be seen in the following statement where the vision of a shared city is interlinked with the debate on the city's name:

It's a denial of our British inheritance...dropping the "London" – it's all about the denial of our British identity. We hear from the SDLP about shared identities and all this sort of stuff, well then, there is a shared identity in the name itself.

The projection of the discussion to a wider political level where equality issues are, for example, a mainstay of the Belfast Agreement, is important because it was constantly argued that principles are being diluted at a local level. Some Protestants consider the Belfast Agreement to be of limited value to their community whether in the city or elsewhere in Northern Ireland: 'It has only just given the nationalists more power because everything in that Belfast Agreement was to give them things that they wanted.'

Thinking About the Future

At the conclusion of each focus group meeting, participants were asked what they thought the city might look like in twenty years time. The responses are a further reflection of varied levels of confidence. For one mature working-class Protestant, the future was not hopeful:

There literally is no culture for Protestants on the Cityside at the minute and in another twenty years down the road, goodness knows, they'll be absolutely nothing there. And the likes of the Memorial Hall, St. Columb's and that, you might find that the spire will be cut and they'll be either made into bars or eating houses or restaurants or something because it has happened before – I mean Great James Street Presbyterian Church [Cityside] it's now just a library...and Clarendon [former Presbyterian church in the Cityside].

Visions of the future were not noticeably different when the same question was put to a group of middle-class Protestants. One participant stated:

I think the city will be more settled in twenty years time, but it will be more settled because the Protestant community will have dwindled very considerably so thereby posing no great threat. From the nationalist/republican end of things, they probably won't be quite so much in our face. They will by that stage feel that they more or less achieved what they're looking for and will probably be a little bit more amenable towards the remaining Protestant community.

The small political representation from the unionist community on Derry City Council seems to affect negatively some Protestants who view their representatives as being somewhat inconsequential. One comment describes the understandings of a Protestant concerning unionists on DCC:

I think they're demoralised in many ways. We did have ten, we're now down to six...they recognise that they don't really count.

Undoubtedly, the way in which this respondent interprets the forum of local politics gives rise to feelings of political marginalisation. It is a comment that reflects the concerns, which the survey identified in relation to the many Protestants who do not feel that their cultural tradition is protected in the city.

Unionist politicians did not escape criticism from some Protestant respondents. The political ineptitude of unionist representatives is believed to be responsible for the sense of marginalisation that many Protestants experience:

It's not a Catholic problem that we have here in Londonderry, it's a unionist Protestant problem because we're putting people in to represent us who are not capable...Our problem is that the people who could best represent Protestants are not going forward in politics. I think they [Protestants] have second-rate representatives.

Overall, the focus groups conducted with members of the Protestant community revealed degrees of discontentment and frustration. Generally, Protestants are not confident about their cultural and political future in the city. Despite the sizeable funding for cross-community schemes and the efforts that community workers have hitherto made, most Protestants did not feel that community relations would improve in 5 or 10 years time.

There was some acknowledgement of the potential for an improvement in cross-community relations as a result of policies encouraging contact between both ethnic communities and also demand their mutual participation in specific schemes. In reference to the work of the Local Strategy Partnership and its role in each of the city's three interfaces, one Protestant, while recognising certain short-comings, still described the cross-community contact which is built-in to particular projects thus:

It's not a natural progression...hopefully it could become a natural progression so I'm not going to discount it or disparage it in any way. There is hope there and it has certainly eased the tension around the interface area.

Recommendations

The study suggests that Protestant alienation in Derry/Londonderry can best be understood as part of a cyclical process that involves a number of connected features. These factors reinforce a process of alienation in which the Protestant community feel socially, emotionally and physically isolated from the city and from the opportunities available in wider urban life.

The research underscores both the multiple nature and cyclical character of Protestant alienation. We highlighted in the final report that the statutory sector in particular has recognised the distinctive needs of the Protestant community and has turned its attention to the particular needs of the Waterside via a range of structures and interventions. It should be remembered here that we are primarily concerned with *spatially* based policies. The rationale for the research is that there are a distinctive set of processes linked to various forms of exclusion in the Waterside.

It is clear that comprehensive and collective planning is required to place the local community on a more progressive and confident future. We suggest that theme-based *Delivery Alliances* are established to deal with specific issues. The outcome of this process would be an agreed strategy for the area that would be time and resource bounded. This emphasis on ‘delivery alliances’ highlights both the need for action and the importance of collective agreement on the way forward. Such a strategy would have profound implications for governance in that it suggests a broadly-based set of experts and interests working on prescriptive agendas in fairly concentrated periods. Six *Delivery Alliances* are proposed dealing with:

1. *Community led regeneration;*
2. *Access to services and moving in the city;*
3. *Developing a neutral public realm;*
4. *Transformational politics;*
5. *Expertise and skills in local development; and*
6. *Governance and political inclusion.*

Each *Alliance* would consist of a small team, say 6-8 people, with specific expertise in each area. *Access to Services*, for instance, might include Translink, the Community Transport Association, local community transport providers, DoE Roads Service, or cycling and walking organisations. While a community representative from the Waterside would be attached formally to each *Alliance*, this would not be inward looking but connected explicitly with interests and experts outside the Waterside. Each *Alliance* would have a specific remit linked to the following activities:

- Benchmark local problems and opportunities based on existing research and evidence;

- Developing an action plan in terms of short, medium and longer term activities in each theme;
- Defining who needs to be involved and charged with delivery;
- Resource implications and potential sources of revenue and capital funding;
- Identifying obstacles to development, risks and uncertainties;
- Linking the actions of the Alliance to the wider Strategic Plan for the Waterside.

This research has provided an integrated approach to understanding the nature of community change within Protestant communities. That analysis needs to be continued via monitoring and evaluation systems, possibly linked to the delivery of neighbourhood renewal (but with a wider spatial coverage). In particular, it needs to take account of:

- demographic change with indicators such as vacant dwellings;
- change of tenancies;
- benefit dependency;
- crime rates;
- health issues;
- community participation;
- educational attainment; and
- employment and unemployment.

The *Alliance* on Community Regeneration could work on a number of specific themes including environmental, economic, and social regeneration, which could pick up on specific themes in the research. These could include for instance on crime and older people and should not specifically relate to conventional economic regeneration themes. Here the themes and actors in the development of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy could provide a starting point for this *Alliance*.

Notes

- 1 The research undertaken was funded jointly by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and Equality Directorate OFM/DFM. The work was also supported by a group of local politicians and community workers. This group was formed with assistance from St. Columb's Park House.
- 2 The report is available at cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/population/popchangederry05.pdf. The report acknowledged and explained not only feelings of alienation but also points to models of inclusion that challenge marginalisation and mistrust through a wider context of inter-community dialogue and the adaptation of existing policy and political structures.
- 3 Given the rise in the non-stating of religion the Census of 2001 included a variable that determined community background thus creating a proxy for religion.
- 4 Nine focus groups were held. An attempt was made to gain a range of voices. Despite this most of those who attended the focus groups tended to hold negative attitudes. The main report contains greater information on methodological issues.