

Issue 15
April 2013

SHARED SPACE

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

Published by
Community Relations Council

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Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

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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

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Ulf Hansson is a Research Associate on the Children and Youth Programme at the UNESCO Centre, University of Ulster. Research interests include, among other things, children and young people's understanding of the Troubles/history and youth participation in the wider civic society.

Neil Jarman is the director of the Institute for Conflict Research, a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice at Queens University and chairs the OSCE/ODIHR Expert Panel on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly.

Joe Law is a Co-Director of Trademark, ICTU's Anti-sectarian Unit, with responsibility for its community-based programmes. He previously worked for Counteract, the anti-intimidation unit of the NI Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and was the lead facilitator in a number of high profile work-based sectarian disputes.

John McCord is a Research Associate in The School of the Built Environment and member of the Built Environment Research Institute, University of Ulster.

Chris Moffat has had a career in social research, teaching and educational publishing. She contributed during the troubles in Northern Ireland to a number of peace, human rights and community relations initiatives, including, as a parent, establishing integrated schools and other local social education and community projects. She edited and published the first book on integrated education and continues to write academically on education rights issues.

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Una O'Connor-Bones is the Director of the Children and Youth Programme at the UNESCO Centre, University of Ulster. She has held lecturing and research posts within the University and is a member of the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences (IRISS). Research areas include children's rights, special educational needs and disability, social inclusion, community relations and citizenship education.

Geraldine Scullion is an independent consultant on human rights and equality issues.

Introduction

As we approach the 15th anniversary of the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement it is worth reflecting on some of the many issues which still need to be addressed as part of the ongoing peace process. Research on a number of these forms the basis for articles in this month's issue of *Shared Space*.

The first article, by Neil Jarman and Geraldine Scullion, examines the issue of Freedom of Assembly and the Right to Protest. This is part of a wider research work commissioned by the Community Relations Council on the tensions and connections between Human Rights, Equality and Community Relations. The authors of the article look at how these rights and freedoms, fundamental to democracy, have been handled in Northern Ireland over the last century and more particularly in recent years. The absence of any formal Bill of Rights has meant that decisions taken by the relevant authorities over allowing or restricting parades or protests have been determined in the past by considerations of security, public order or community relations, more than on the need to protect an established equal right to protest or freedom to assemble. The result is that there has been confusion or uncertainty about the extent of these rights and freedoms.

The recent flags protests are a good illustration of the long running issue of clarification on the parameters of the right to protest in Northern Ireland. They highlight some of the tensions that exist between a regulatory framework orientated towards mitigating inter-communal relations and one based on protecting human rights. It is an issue which is unlikely to go away.

The second article, by Stevie Nolan and Joe Law from Trademark, the trade union based training and research unit, addresses the issue of sectarian harassment and discrimination in the workplace. This is drawn from Trademark research published last year and supported by CRC. The article provides a useful historical summary of the academic research on this issue over the past thirty years.

Workplace segregation and the existence of sectarian chill factors are identified as significant dynamics creating an atmosphere of intimidation and harassment leading to workplace imbalances. Although recent surveys have indicated that workplaces are now more integrated and that workers are

supportive of mixed workforces, Trademark research points out that labour mobility can in many places remain highly localised and reflect segregated living patterns. Also, legislative requirements to monitor religious and ethnic workplace intakes do not apply to companies employing less than 10 employees. Some researchers have suggested that the extent of workplace segregation, particularly in the private sector, has been underestimated.

Much discussion has taken place in recent years to improve relations at interface areas and to address the issue of peacewalls. But discussion has largely been confined to adults in those areas. In order to extend this dialogue CRC commissioned research by John Bell of the Institute for Conflict Research to find out the views of young people living at Belfast interfaces. The research aimed to assess their views about the impact that living in interface areas had on their daily lives and on how they would like to be included in dialogue about the way forward.

It is crucial that in forthcoming debates with residents about regenerating interface areas and developing area based action plans that young people are included in the process. They need to be given voices to ask their own questions. The researcher found that there remains a general lack of opportunity for young people to have sustained 'face to face' contact with others from different backgrounds. In such a context some young people tend to draw from the sectarian narratives of others. This needs to be challenged.

The last two articles are on the theme of integrated education. The first is based on a review report of the policy and research evidence on integrated education since 1999. The research was commissioned by the Integrated Education Fund and carried out by a research team, Ulf Hansson, Una O'Connor-Bones and John McCord, from the UNESCO Centre at the University of Ulster. The article focuses on the background and context for integrated education, changes in education policy towards its provision and also an analysis of political party manifesto statements on the issue. The authors note a shift in political and party discourse towards the concept of 'shared education' and away from integrated education.

The statutory responsibility of the Department of Education to support and facilitate integrated education appears to the authors to have been superseded by an emphasis on sharing in education and a Ministerial Advisory Group is due to report on the latter this month. The article's authors argue that the terminology around 'shared' education is vague and clearer distinctions need to be made between 'shared', 'mixed' and 'integrated' education. They also wonder whether there will be sufficient financial commitment by government towards shared education projects once the existing funding from charitable

trusts comes to an end. Most crucially, they raise the question of whether government is aiming to maintain the existing system of separate schools with limited opportunities for cross-community pupil contact or whether a more fundamental structural reform of the education system is envisaged.

The final article by Chris Moffat explores the right to integrated education and its basis in international human rights law. It does not attempt to survey the development of integrated education in any detail; instead it focuses on its failure to flourish since the Good Friday Agreement. The author argues that parents' religious and philosophical convictions concerning a child's education and teaching should receive the same respect regardless of whether they are Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Hindu, Atheist or integrated; and that all State-funded schools should observe international standards for non-discrimination, inclusion and respect for minority children and parents. She argues that the State should fund integrated education to the extent at least that it funds segregated, denominational or other minority schools. The practice in the Irish Republic offers an interesting comparison.

Ray Mullan

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