Redeveloping Division:
The Legacy of Conflict and Contested Space in Post-Peace Treaty Belfast,
Northern Ireland

By
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ways in which the phenomena of walling, ethnic segregation, sectarian violence, and imbalanced urban development have continued to reproduce themselves and reinforce one another in the present day, post-Good Friday city of Belfast. Situated within an understanding of the historic patterns of urban development and sectarian conflict in Belfast, as well as the city’s emerging socio-spatial divergence, three case studies of present-day management and development at key ‘interface’ areas in North, West, and East Belfast are presented. These case studies highlight the continued legacy of violent conflict on present-day development outcomes, as well as help to frame the impact that these outcomes have on the emergence of divergent visions of desired post-conflict urban development. Ultimately, this thesis underlines why interface management, urban development, and the mitigation or escalation of violent conflict must not be addressed as separate functions within the context of chronic violence by examining how the Belfast’s legacy of urban violence has conditioned the restructuring of physical space at various scales, and has itself subsequently been conditioned by those outcomes.
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Majority Protestant Unionist  Majority Catholic Nationalist  Peaceline
Major Motorway  Belfast City Hall

* Base Map Source from Calame and Charlesworth 2009
Chapter 1:

1.1 Introduction

When Belfast City Cemetery first opened its gates in 1869, its defining feature was invisible to the naked eye. Underground, a nine-foot wall had been built as a means to separate the Protestant and Catholic sections of the graveyard. Today the subterranean wall remains, marked by a slim grass strip that follows its path, and local residents still joke that it is only fair that the two populations remain divided even in death.

Belfast is a divided city. Marked by significant levels of ethnic segregation and periodic sectarian violence since its 19th century rise as a major industrial capital, as well as periods of sustained civil conflict, most notably the 1968 -1998 “Troubles,” Belfast also represents the quintessential contested city. Unlike pre-1989 Berlin and present day Nicosia, Belfast is not a ‘partitioned’ city. Rather, alongside Jerusalem and a growing number of world and regional capitals, Belfast is characterized by a static level of ethnic and social dichotomization, but incomplete spatial partition (Benvenisti 1982). In Belfast, this condition is physically represented by a patchwork of ‘interfaces;’ fault lines along which larger intercommunity, ethnic and national, conflicts are expressed. Anchoring these interfaces areas are the city’s famous walls and physical partitions, known locally as ‘peacelines.’

In his 1996 work, Modernity at Large, Arjun Appadurai proclaimed the “implosion of global and national conflicts into the urban world”. Over a decade later, the broader discourses of international security, development, and urban studies have all further advanced the conception of the city as an increasingly important lens through which to view the formation, articulation, and impact of these fundamentally national and supranational processes (e.g. Gugler, 2004, Davis, 2004, Bollens, 2006). During this time, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement brought an official end to the intertwined nationalist
(Irish/British) and Religious (Catholic/Protestant) conflict which had raged in Northern Ireland for over thirty years. With this national level peace process came the cessation of paramilitary violence between Republican and Unionist factions in the city of Belfast, where the vast majority of sectarian incidents took place during the Troubles, and the city has since become one of the central case studies within the burgeoning literature on urban planning and conflict resolution. Simultaneously, high profile signature redevelopment projects such as the Laganside and Titanic Quarter have significantly transformed the physical character of Belfast's city center, covering the scars of industrial decline and decades of violent conflict with a reimaged which is now widely held up as a paradigm in post-conflict redevelopment and regeneration.

However, as the first full decade of political power-sharing and significant economic growth in Belfast's history comes to a close, important questions remain as to what sort of trajectories are emerging with regard to both urban development and sectarian conflict. On the one hand, the economic boom of the past decade is undeniably evident in the newly constructed luxury apartments, cafes, and bustling, ethnicity-neutral "cultural quarters" of the city center; all contributing to Belfast's international rebranding as a 'normalized' and prosperous post-conflict capital. On the other hand, segregation, sectarianism, fear, and violence remain rampant throughout much of the city, and those residents most directly associated with, and impacted by, the 'Troubles' have been largely excluded from the economic and development gains that have coincided with the peace process. In West Belfast, for example, an area of the city characterized by high levels of sectarian violence for over 300 years, only one of the seven 'inward investments' to locate there as a 'dividend' of the 1998 peace process remained by 2007, employing just 27 people (O'Hearn, 2008).

This development disconnect is compounded and reinforced by the fact that significant swaths of the traditional 'heartland' neighborhoods remain comprised of derelict buildings and dead space; the legacy of physical adaptations to intercommunity
violence and the city’s more general demographic and economic decline. As Murtagh (2008) notes, the socio-spatially uneven economic gains, paired with this sharp contrast between the new, neutral, and ‘redeveloped’ Belfast and its traditional, physically deteriorating heartland neighborhoods, point towards an emerging “twin-speed” condition in the city.

At the neighborhood scale, the process of walling and local level partition that famously began in the early 1970’s has not subsided, evident in the staggering fact that more “peacelines” have been constructed to separate Catholics and Protestants in the decade following the peace accord than in the decade before it. In addition, the recent increase in private residential gating has only added to the complexity of physical division in Belfast, producing new walls throughout the city virtually indistinguishable from their sectarian equivalents.

Continued levels of urban civil violence have matched the ongoing production of formal peacelines and more general ‘disaffiliation’ of the city (Atkinson 2006). While fatalities have decreased significantly since formal cessation of Unionist and Republican paramilitary activity in 1998 and the withdrawal of the British Army from the city, the culture of sectarian conflict has remained a tangible reality in the city. This fact is perhaps most directly observable in the continued use of sectarian imagery to mark the physical environment (See Appendix A), as well as through local perceptions of increased intercommunity hostility in post peace treaty Belfast, as well as the broader population’s feeling that the future of Catholic-Protestant community relations at the national level is deteriorating (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006).

This thesis examines the ways in which the phenomena of walling, ethnic segregation, sectarian violence, and imbalanced urban development have continued to reproduce themselves and reinforce one another in the present day, post-Good Friday city of Belfast. Situated within an understanding of the historic patterns of urban development
and sectarian conflict in Belfast, as well as the city's emerging socio-spatial divergence, three case studies of present-day management and development at key 'interface' areas in North, West, and East Belfast are presented. These case studies illuminate the ways in which the historic context of chronic violence in Belfast has shaped physical adaptations at the neighborhood level, which, in turn, have further entrenched ethno-sectarian division in post-peace treaty Belfast and contributed to divergent 'bottom-up' and 'top down' visions of what ends redevelopment efforts ought to prioritize during the past decade of post-conflict reconstruction. This process is not, however, a strictly linear one, and must be understood in terms of an endless cycle of structural conditioning, local level interaction, and further structural elaboration.¹

In this sense, the analysis offered in this thesis is firmly set within the understanding that urban violence as "both a result of, and catalyst for, transformations in urban governance and spatial organization" (Jutersonke, Muggah, and Rodgers 2009) and that this process is continuous and iterative. For this reason, this work highlights the importance of framing Belfast's history of chronic violence as not simply occurring within a context of urban and physical development, but also as the context in which urban development and physical adaptation have occurred.

Within this framework, the specific investigation of neighborhood-level physical adaptation to conditions of chronic violence in Belfast provide two central findings. First, the multiple, small-scale partitions constructed throughout Belfast as a reaction to the uncontrollable urban civil violence that emerged with the Troubles in 1969, though intended as temporary measures, have had long lasting impacts beyond simply their role as physical dividers. Indeed, the lack of coordinated management of these structures, and the 'interface' areas around them have led to the further entrenching of the sectarian divide in their areas. This is shown to be the result of a process through which, though occasionally

adapted, these structures and the meaning ascribed on them has proven impossible to transform. This distinction is a critical one within ‘contested space,’ which, as Gaffikin and McEldowney, et al., (2008) highlight, is often characterized by ‘display spaces’ used as a means to “affirm what tend to be fixed identities” rather than ‘relational spaces,’ able to accommodate “multiple identities that interact and change, based on negotiation over time.”

This is not to say that transformative redevelopment is impossible in contested space. Rather, this thesis shows how the context of chronic violence, as well as the resulting fragmentation of government departments (those concerned with planning, redevelopment, and security in particular) have created conditions in which coordinated and holistic redevelopment in these areas can rarely be achieved, and even more rarely replicated.

Second, the case studies illustrate how specific physical interventions and redevelopment efforts aimed at reducing sectarian conflict at the interface, while occasionally successful in reducing levels of violence in those areas, have in fact amplified the emphasis placed on the defense of ethnic territory as a central objective within the broader sectarian conflict in Belfast over the past decade. Critically, it is shown that this increasing conflation of physical territory and sectarian conflict has contributed to a divergence between the formal, government supported, vision of a “shared future” in Belfast, imagined in through the national level reconciliation process and based on increased integration and social interaction between Unionist and Nationalist communities, and a neighborhood-level vision of a peaceful but separate future for the city, resting on the maintenance of physical segregation and cultural exclusion.

Situating both the impacts of extreme spatial and bureaucratic fragmentation on redevelopment efforts at the neighborhood level, as well as the above-mentioned divergence in conceptualizations of a peaceful, agreed future, within the present-day ‘twin
speed' condition in Belfast, this thesis examines how sectarian conflict has played a role in shaping not only local level adaptations, but also wider development trends.

Ultimately, this thesis underlines why interface management, urban development, and the mitigation or escalation of violent conflict must not be addressed as separate functions within the context of chronic violence. Moving beyond the traditional tendency to emphasize either the impact of the violence on the built environment (Barakat 1992), or the opportunities and constraints that the planning process itself represent to meaningful conflict mitigation (Calame 2009; Bollens 1999; Bollens 2006; Neill and Schwedler 2001), this thesis seeks to elucidate how the context of chronic violence conditions the restructuring of physical space at various scales, and is itself subsequently conditioned by those outcomes.

The following chapters underline the outcomes of the simultaneous, and continual, conflict, reconstruction, and development specific to Belfast, Northern Ireland, and thus within a unique context of protracted ethnic conflict in the United Kingdom, one of Europe’s most powerful and wealthy nations. For that reason, these findings may not be directly transferable to other cities currently struggling with urban civil conflict. However, as cities such as Bagdad and Kabul, amongst others, join the traditionally recognized 'frontier cities' of Belfast, Jerusalem, Beirut, and Nicosia, as the ground on which contending conceptions of history, sovereignty, and legitimacy are being violently contested (see Kotek, 1999: 222), lessons from Belfast’s long history at the nexus of urban development and chronic violence become increasingly relevant.

Indeed, with over 90% of the world’s nations are now classified as multi-ethnic, and 60% of all conflicts since 1945 involving interstate group clashes, the interaction between issues of ethnicity, identity, contestation and civil conflict amidst urban development and physical reconstruction promise to be increasingly common and problematic features of contemporary urban life (Bollens 1999, 7; Amin 2002).
1.2 Terminology and Definitions

It is critical to provide some clarity on the intended meanings of certain terms/concepts in this work before moving forward.

Ethnic:

The term ethnic is a contentious one within studies of segregation, conflict, and demographics more generally. While it is impossible to provide a universally accepted definition, within this work an ‘ethnic group’ represents, as Gordon (1964) asserted: “Any group which is defined or set off by race, religion, or national origin or some combination of these categories.” This definition relies on the assumption that these categories have a common social-psychological referent, in that they serve to create a sense of belonging to a certain group and, as Weber (1978) informs us, this perceived belonging may be real or imaginary. What is critical here is simply to establish that the ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ populations of Belfast in fact represent two distinct ethnic groups, a view supported by the majority of authors on the Northern Ireland conflict (Boal and Douglas 1982).

Conflict:

It is important to distinguish ‘violent conflict’ from non-violent forms of conflict more generally. Within this work, violent conflict refers to the organized, large-scale violence which has characterized Belfast during certain periods, such as the 1969-1998 period of the Troubles. Conflict more generally, refers to the historic and continuing sectarian struggle in Belfast, comprised of political and social contestation, as well as perpetual low level violence in the form of rioting, property damage, and clashes with police. Differentiating between violent and non-violent forms of conflict is particularly important when discussing exceptional cases, such as Belfast, where a basic level of sectarian violence, while varying in intensity over time, has become a chronic condition.
Building on this distinction, the term ‘post-conflict,’ as used in this work, refers to the period following the official end of, organized, violent conflict. In this case, the 1998 Belfast Agreement (also known as the Good Friday Agreement) officially designates the beginning of ‘post-conflict’ conditions in Belfast. However, as Vigh (2008) points out, it is critical to recognize that an official ‘post-conflict’ designation may mean little to the conditions of everyday life for many of the vulnerable and warring parties on the ground. For this reason, the period starting from the signing of the 1998 peace treaty is simply referred to as the 'post-peace treaty' era within this work, recognizing that the official cessation of violence does not necessarily mean an end to conflict.

**Segregation:**

Segregation and integration are defined as the following:

“A particular ethnic group is completely un-segregated when its members are distributed uniformly relative to the remainder of the population. Any deviation from such uniformity represents a situation characterized by segregation, and the greater the deviations the greater the segregation” (Barrage, 1986; Herbert and Johnston, 1978).

**Interface:**

A considerable portion of this work is committed to examining social processes and physical outcomes that take place at the ‘interface’ of Catholic and Protestant communities in Belfast. The interface represents a physical proximity of the two groups and can refer to any thing from a single house or road, to entire patches of the city with a fairly consistent Unionist/Nationalist division. It is important to note that the term ‘interface’ is a product of the Troubles and that, prior to the 1970s and 1980s no official term existed for the areas of proximity between Protestant and Catholic communities.
Peaceline

The term ‘peaceline’ is the official designation for the numerous structures of micro neighborhood level partition implemented from 1970 onwards, initially by the British Army, with the Northern Ireland Office taking over the responsibility in 1988. The structures are comprised primarily of gating and walls constructed of various materials ranging from corrugated iron to chainlink, depending on their specific context and purpose. The walls also vary in height and visual penetrability throughout the city, ranging from approximately 5 to 30 feet. A common characteristic of Belfast’s ‘peacelines’ is the visible layering of materials resulting from the structures many alterations in size and shape over time.

1.3 Methodology

This thesis is based on findings from three phases of research: 1) library research, data collection and analysis, 2) field interviews and observation, and 3) on-site mapping in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The information gathered is presented through longitudinal analysis of conflict and urban development trends in Belfast, as well as case studies of the current management and development at three specific interface areas in the city. The information collected throughout these phases was assembled from three main sources:

1) Archival records: newspaper and periodical articles; reports from relevant groups and agencies; existing academic literature, as well as historic city maps.

2) On-site observation and mapping of Belfast’s City Center and adjoining neighborhoods; including photographic documentation and mapping of the relevant interface areas.

3) In-person interviews with individuals at statutory agencies, academic and policy institutions, as well as community organizations, non-profits, and private companies involved with urban planning, security, development, and interface issues.

All fieldwork was conducted in Belfast between June and September 2009, while library research was conducted between February 2009 and May 2010.
Field Research

The community access and contacts necessary to conduct field research were initially arranged through the assistance of faculty at Queens University Belfast's School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering (SPACE), during the time in which I was undertaking an independent program review of the SPACE graduate program's 'community practice' module. While certain key actors in government and planning departments were specifically targeted for interviews due to position, expertise or, in some cases, a history of participation in past studies, the majority of the contacts interviewed were acquired through the "snowball effect" of introduction through previous sources. Though my access to community members, local politicians and planners was quite high as a result of my work with Queens University, the timing of my fieldwork in Belfast, and my status as an 'outsider' had two distinct impacts on this research:

First, working in Belfast between June and September 2009 meant that my research coincided with the annual period of heightened conflict and tension that accompanies "marching season" across Northern Ireland. Marching season, marked by the Orange parades that take place around the 12th of July, is a yearly celebration of the Protestant Prince William of Orange's victory over the Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Today, the significance of the relatively obscure historical event has long been overshadowed by the consistency of violent incidents and rioting that accompany its celebration; the traditional processions and bon-fires magnifying, yearly, the true extent to which space within the city remains fundamentally contested and peace a fragile condition in Belfast. While international, and even regional (United Kingdom) media coverage no longer emphasizes the severity and regularity of incidents, headlines such as “Rioters rampage for second night in Belfast”\(^2\) and, “Ardoyne riots ‘organized to kill police’”\(^3\) remain commonplace within local newspapers.

\(^2\) Belfast Telegraph, July 15th
\(^3\) Belfast Telegraph, July 15th
As my own research revolved around observing cross-community interaction in Belfast’s neighborhoods, as well as interviewing key actors in the “management” of the interface areas between communities, the timing of my visit was both a blessing and a curse. While I was able to witness, first hand, the nature of the rioting and violence that ensues almost instantaneously when community boundaries are infringed upon and sectarian identities ritualistically put on display, I also found that many of my target interviewees were so preoccupied with the mitigation of violence (in some cases literally walking the line between protestant and catholic communities day and night in an attempt to discourage sectarian-minded youth from congregating at these traditional flash points) that gaining access to the communities was particularly difficult during this period. In one of my first interviews with a community worker in a small catholic enclave in East Belfast called the Short Strand, the respondent summed up the situation concisely when he said, “June and July are tough months here. Anyone with any sense leaves the city, the rest of us are busy either trying to start or stop a riot...” (F. Brennan, interview)

Second, while I found local politicians, academics and professional planners were generally very comfortable divulging information to a ‘non-local,’ with non-local and especially non-sectarian ties, this status had the particularly limiting effect on my ability to build trust with members of the traditionally sectarian neighborhoods. This is in part due to the fact that in these areas, Catholic and Protestant alike, subject matter related to ‘urban planning’ arouses a certain level of suspicion. Both communities, at least to some degree, view the process as one of social engineering – a tool to be used by or against a given group in order to influence demographics and consolidate political power. This is the result of not only the long history of competition over resources, particularly housing, between sectarian groups, but also past experiences with more ‘neutral’ large-scale urban renewal projects that had disastrous effects on particular neighborhoods; displacing many inner city residents through the clearance of housing to accommodate new transportation infrastructure as well as the wide-spread introduction of cul-de-sacs to replace traditionally
higher density living patterns in the post-World War II period (Wiener 1976).

Case Study Selection:

The three case studies of interface management and development presented in this work were selected on the basis of four key criteria:

1) Spatial location: The case studies are each located in different sections of Belfast. By examining cases in the East, West, and North Belfast, interface development and management can be viewed in areas of the city characterized by different demographic and spatial characteristics. This spatial variance was intentionally prioritized to insure that natural development outcomes would be as unlike as possible, while a history of chronic violence is consistent throughout.

2) Observable History: As mentioned above, each of the three interfaces selected have a long history as ‘contested spaces.’ Each area was initially demarcated and physically reinforced in the 1970s, with continued adaptations thereafter. This history allows for the observation of transformation and stagnation over time. This common lifespan is also critical to understanding how these spaces shape, and are shaped, by the social processes surrounding conflict and development.

3) Community Access: Due to the limited time period in which this fieldwork was carried out, as well as the particularly contentious time of year, case selection was limited to areas where community access could be arranged and observation, photography, and interviews could be carried out with local approval.

It should be noted here that all three case studies focus on the interface between communities living in public housing estates throughout Belfast. This is a direct result of the fact that a) the vast majority of intercommunity conflict in Belfast takes place in working neighborhoods characterized by high levels of deprivation, b) a considerable percentage of housing in these neighborhoods is public (Shirlow and Murtagh 2006, 164).
Limitations:

The main limitations of this work include:

1) Case Selection: Because this work was constrained by which neighborhoods I was able to access, the pool of possible cases was not truly representative of all Belfast’s interface zones. Though the three cases were selected purposively for their dissimilar locations, they all represent interfaces with high profile levels of violence over their history. In addition, two of the three interface areas selected represent ethnic 'enclaves' amidst a larger opposing populations, further heightening the sense of vulnerability that characterizes life in all of Belfast’s interface zones. Had this research selected lower profile interface zones, especially those without physical peacelines, attitudes and views expressed by interviewees may have been different. That said, it can be assumed that the cases selected are reasonably representative of other interface zones characterized by peaceline structures due to the common impact of the walls themselves. No peaceline throughout the city has been removed after being implemented, so outcomes of this nature could not be observed.

2) This research is largely qualitative in nature, relying on the views and opinions of those Belfast residents, professionals, and experts that I interviewed. Obviously, the sampling methods are thus extremely influential on the information presented. While certain individuals were necessarily sought out due to unique expertise, the reliance on the 'snowball' method which my limited time in the field dictated means that their is likely some bias present in those views put forward. While a conscious effort was made to conduct interviews with both self-described ‘Unionist’ and ‘Nationalist’ sources, community access limitations resulted in a larger sample of Unionist individuals being interviewed, and neighborhoods observed, weighting the opinions towards that perspective. Finally, as mentioned above, the timing of these interviews, during the summer months and around marching season means that opinions expressed across the board may be influenced by the
heightened tension which characterizes this period.

1.4 Thesis Overview

This thesis is presented in five chapters. In the first chapter I have laid out and defined the terms and concepts central to this work and outlined the research methodology that this thesis employs. In the following section, 1.5, the broad policy and political context in which development and conflict are presently playing out in Belfast is introduced.

Chapter 2 focuses on the historical trajectories of urban civil conflict and physical development in Belfast. The chapter is aimed at establishing a longitudinal context in which to observe the chronic nature of urban civil violence in Belfast, as well as its relationship to the boom and bust nature of urban development in the city. Without this context, we are hopeless to understand conditions evolving in present-day Belfast. I focus particularly on the spatial and physical impacts that a trend of population decline beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s has had on Belfast, and its subsequent role in exacerbating the challenges faced by the city's traditionally sectarian neighborhoods. In addition, the shifting nature of segregation and sectarian violence in Belfast is presented. Through these histories a critical concept is introduced; that violent conflict, segregation, and urban regeneration and development ought not be viewed as separate phenomena in Belfast, but rather as interrelated and mutually reinforcing conditions.

In the third chapter, the specific cases of the Short Strand in East Belfast, the Northgate/Duncairn Gardens development in North Belfast, and the Suffolk/Lenadoon interface in West Belfast are examined in order to illustrate emerging trends in management and development at the interface between Nationalist and Unionist communities. These case studies underline how the legacy of violent conflict in Belfast has created conditions of extreme fragmentation amongst those actors (both state and
civil society) who play a role in shaping physical development outcomes. In turn, each case study exemplifies how attempts at physical redevelopment have failed to transform the nature of contested space in which they take place, and in fact have resulted in a deepening of the sectarian divide. Central here is an understanding of the present-day narrative which has been built around the interfaces and the maintenance of ethnic territory at the neighborhood-level, and the employment of the “ratchet effect” to illustrate how physical partitions at interface areas, while their future uses may be slightly altered, retain their ascribed meaning and create nearly impossible conditions for comprehensive transformation.

In chapter 4 the impact of these neighborhood-level outcomes on the competing national and local level views of how ‘shared space’ for a ‘shared future’ ought to be physically manifest is examined in order to explore the relationship between the difficulties in redeveloping interface areas and the city’s wider development trajectories. The chapter highlights how the national level peace and reconciliation process has prioritized the development of an integrated and non-sectarian city, while the continued local-level struggle over ethnic territory illustrated by the case studies continues to drive inverse outcomes throughout much of the city, leaving traditionally sectarian neighborhoods disconnected from the development gains of the past decade.

In chapter 5 concluding remarks are offered and key questions for future research are put forward.

The ordering of this work, beginning with macro-level trends in chapter 2, examining outcomes at the neighborhood level in chapter 3, before again widening the lens to the inter-scalar outcomes in chapter 4, intentionally follows the logic of those cycles of macro-level conditioning, micro-level interaction and adaptation, and macro-level elaboration to which this work calls attention.
1.5 Urban Planning, Development, and Conflict: Northern Irish Policy and Politics in Context

The politics of Northern Ireland: a brief overview

From an institutional perspective, the political structure and functions of Northern Ireland may best be described as a moving target. While a complete history is not necessary for the purposes of this work, it will be important to outline the basic structure existing today, as well as introduce the relevant transitions that the system has recently undergone and will likely experience in the near future, in order to better situate the reader within the relevant political and policy context. As Belfast is the cultural, industrial, and administrative capital of Northern Ireland, the national level politics are immediately tangible throughout the city. In addition, the planning and development processes in Belfast have been directly formed by the structure of governance in Northern Ireland throughout its history.

Unionist Local Government: 1922 – 1973

After its establishment as a member country of the United Kingdom in 1922, the Northern Ireland Parliament was formed to govern the six counties which make up the country. The Unionist Party represented the majority in parliament, establishing a continuous Protestant monopoly on political power during this period.


Between 1973 and 2007, not including two brief stints of devolved governance by the Northern Ireland Assembly, Northern Ireland operated under ‘Direct Rule’ from the Westminster Parliament in London. In practice, ‘Direct Rule’ refers to the “exercise of all functions of government in Northern Ireland by the UK Government.” (Birrell 2009, 1) Though specific functions have been reserved for the British Government in the administration of the country since the 1920-22 establishment of the Northern Irish State,
it was not until the emergence of the ‘Troubles’ in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s that all devolved powers were revoked from the traditionally Unionist national government. During this period a new cabinet position was created within the British Parliament, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with the responsibility of coordinating work of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), which carried out the political functions of Direct Rule.

**Good Friday Agreement: April 10th 1998**

The Good Friday Agreement officially brought an end to the thirty-year period of sustained conflict which had begun in 1969. While the complexities of the Agreement need not be explained here, its fundamental provision was, along with the reestablishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly and power sharing between Unionist and Nationalist political parties, that no change to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland could be made without a majority vote of its citizens. In this sense it is important to understand that the peace treaty did not resolve the Northern Irish question; namely would the country remain part of the United Kingdom, join the Republic of Ireland, or become an independent entity. Rather, the Good Friday Agreement has insured that the country’s present condition as a member of the United Kingdom cannot be overturned until the majority of the population are in favor of seceding. As of 2007, roughly 55% support a continued union through devolved political structure, while 45% would vote to somehow alter the arrangement (NILT 2007). Despite the peace treaty’s official acceptance, devolved governance failed to be immediately reinstated due to continued political conflict between Sinn Fein (Nationalist majority party) and the Democratic Unionist Party (Unionist majority Party) over the status of the official Police Service of Northern Ireland.

**Restored Devolution: 2007 – Present**

In May 2007 devolution was restored in Northern Ireland and the current power-sharing system was put in place, by which Unionist and Nationalist interests are guaranteed
representation within the Northern Ireland Assembly. The on-going attempt at the
devolution of policing, as well as the projected devolution of local planning powers in 2011,
mean that Northern Ireland is currently amidst a transformation that will have critical
outcomes for Belfast's future development as well as the mitigation of conflict at the urban
and national level. (See N.I. Political Organization Flowchart, Appendix A)

Spatial Planning and Contested Space

While the outcomes of a return to local control over the traditionally contentious
issue of planning is as-of-yet unknown in Northern Ireland, it is important to note that the
broader United Kingdom, following the lead of the European Union, has begun transitioning
from their established town planning model towards a new "spatial planning" paradigm
(UCL/Deloitte, 2007: 1). Though the spatial planning model is far from consolidated
in Northern Ireland, its premise that planning ought to prioritize the "coordination
or integration of the spatial dimension of sectoral policies through a territorial-based
strategy..." and establish a "better coordination on territorial impacts horizontally across
different sectors..." (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006: 91) is immediately relevant to the
situation on the ground in Belfast. The model is being championed by policy makers and
academics alike, and, if embraced should present new opportunities for coordinated action
in addressing interface development in the future. Questions remain as to how Belfast's
current, fragmented, planning and policy bodies will react to this transition as its success
will inherently rest on the ability for strategic, coordinated policy and action between
various government agencies and community level organizations.

Finally, as the national level peace process continues to take hold, heightened
attention is being paid to the role of "space" and territory within Belfast and Northern
Ireland's other contested cities. With the launch of the government's "A Shared Future:
Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland" project in 2005
(see OFMDFM 2005), local planning practitioners and academics have turned their
attention to the role of public space and urban planning in informing what a ‘shared future’ may resemble when policy and rhetoric begin to take physical form. Much of the research conducted as part of this work speak directly to this effort, examining how amidst the present urban divergence described previously lies an equally divergent vision of what a shared space means between the ethnically segregated communities as well as the various policy and planning agencies attempting to transform the built environment in Belfast.

Figure 3: The Waterfront Hall in Belfast city center. Its expansive glass façade, looking out over the Lagan River, would have been unimaginable during the height of the Troubles due to the frequency of bombing attacks on high profile buildings.
Chapter 2: Chronic Violence and Belfast’s History of Development, Decline, and Segregation

2.1 Chapter Overview

“There is no misunderstanding between Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland, none whatsoever. Nor do they need to get to know each other better. They know each other only too well, having lived alongside each other for four centuries, part of the same society yet divided by politics and history. There is not a clash of cultures; it is a culture in itself, a point overlooked by most observers.” (Stewart 2001)

In Belfast, the narrative of the past decade is one of internationally lauded redevelopment, economic boom, and an emergence from over 30 years of sustained violent conflict. The city center’s confident, albeit precarious, glass facades (Figure 3) proclaim that the regular paramilitary bombing campaigns of the 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s are a thing of the past. Overcoming sporadic press coverage of sectarian rioting, regionally high murder rates, and periodic breakdowns in the governmental power-sharing arrangement established by the Good Friday Agreement, Belfast is in the middle of a comprehensive campaign to transition its image from pariah to paradigm in urban peace building and post-conflict reconstruction.

An examination the historical trajectory of urban development and conflict in Belfast, however, calls for a tempering of this optimism. Indeed, as this chapter will illustrate, the city’s historical patterns of segregation, violence, and development, though shifting, have not reached a point of pattern break. In fact, the static nature of these individual features, as well as their mutually reinforcing characteristics, has defined the city since its inception. This chapter also addresses the ‘boom and bust’ nature of urban development in Belfast and the ways in which this pattern is in large part mirrored in the history of violent conflict in the city. In section 11.2 a consolidated history of urban development and conflict in Belfast is presented, beginning in the 17th century, but focusing mainly on the pattern of urban decline and violence during the period between Ireland’s
partition in 1921/22 and the beginning of the Troubles in 1960s.

Section 2.3 presents the significant and seemingly irreversible impacts that the Troubles had on segregation, violence, planning, and urban development during the 1968-1998 period and the initial use of physical walling and local level partition to separate Catholic/Nationalist and Protestant/Unionist communities is examined.

Throughout, historic maps are presented to illustrate the considerable physical alterations that have characterized Belfast’s transition from a booming industrial capital, to its present day condition. Critical throughout these two sections is establishing an understanding of the chronic nature of sectarian violence in Belfast and its mutually reinforcing relationship with what Boal (1994) describes as the “radical spatial transformation” that has accompanied the city’s protracted economic decline and physical restructuring.

2.2 Boom and Bust: Urban Development and Violence in Pre-Troubles Belfast

The origins of the present day City of Belfast date back to approximately 1607, when the Ulster Plantation was established in the north of Ireland, bringing with it the first considerable in-migration of a Protestant land owning class from England and Scotland. Transitioning from its agrarian heritage, Belfast grew up around trade and industry throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, quickly becoming one of the United Kingdom’s largest sea ports, as well as a world leader in rope making, linen textiles, and ship building. Following industry’s lead, the population of Belfast rapidly increased, tripling to 71,447 between 1800 and 1841 and subsequently booming to 349,180 by 1901, a 500% increase over just 60 years (Royle 1986). As evident in figure 4, the city’s growth spread outward from the Lagan River, the core of Belfast’s industrial sector. It was during these years, as the process of industrialization transformed what was a small Presbyterian town into a city

4 Though Belfast’s heritage as a major city begins in this period, the site was home to the village of Béal Feirste, dating back to the Bronze Age.
Figure 4: Belfast City Growth Map: Pre-1758 - 1980 (Base Map amended from Barakat, 1993)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>71,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>87,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>121,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>172,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>208,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>255,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>349,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>386,946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1926 | 415,151     |
1937 | 438,086     |
1951 | 443,671     |
1961 | 415,856     |
1971 | 362,082     |
1981 ***|
1991 | 236,116     |
2001 | 232,319     |

*** Due to complications related to the Troubles, the 1981 census is not considered to be reliable.

Figure 5: Belfast City Population by Decade: 1841 - 2001 (Source: Royle 1986)
with a sizable, and continually increasing Catholic workforce that the settlement pattern and economic conditions which have defined the basic nature of segregation and violence in Belfast ever since first took shape.

As the cities physical boundaries expanded to meet the housing needs of the urban in-migration, a demographic pattern that saw large numbers of Catholics settling on in the western section of the city formed. This spatial outcome was quite likely simply due to the fact that West Belfast’s spine, the Falls Road, would have been the main entrance to the city for Catholics entering the city in search of work or fleeing famine from the rural western counties (Wiener 1976). It was during this time that Belfast’s ‘heartland’ neighborhoods were established. Representing more than simply ethnic enclaves, these areas quickly came to represent cultural homelands, establishing the basis for the intertwined nature of national/urban conflict in Belfast long before the formal establishment of the Northern Irish State. The process of industrialization in the United Kingdom led to friction between Catholic and Protestant populations in many cities, most notably the industrial capitals of the North (Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, etc.), yet none experienced the same levels of segregation, nor consistent violent outbursts as Belfast (Neal 1988). While an in-depth analysis and causal argument for this variation in levels of segregation and violence is beyond the scope of this work, it is suffice to say the heightened level of conflict in Belfast is largely attributable to the urgency of ‘political question’ that hung over the island of Ireland and was comparatively absent from Belfast’s mainland equivalences.

While the religious and political struggle between Catholics and Protestants in the United Kingdom dates back to the 1500s, the first instances of organized, urban sectarian violence in Belfast occurred in 1835, and a pattern of regular violence took hold in 1857 with major riots breaking out throughout the 19th century in 1864, 1872, 1880, 1884, 1886, and 1898 (Boyd 1972). Nearly all of these incidents, similar to those experienced yearly still, were the product of Orange Parades, protests, and clashes around
the public celebration of important days in the history of either the Catholic or Protestant communities. Though low-level sectarian violence became the norm throughout the year, the major disturbances all were essentially individual and confined incidents within the larger narrative of intercommunity tension (Farrell 2000).

From a spatial perspective these riots nearly always originated at points of close proximity between Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods, generally in the West and North of the city. This spatial rooting of the conflict has carried on through to present day, largely due to the fact that the parade routes and patterns of segregation have remained essentially static. (See figure 6)

![Comparative Mapping: Belfast Ethnic Segregation 1901 (left) and 2001 (right) (Base Map Sources: Barakat 1993; www.irelandstory.com)](image)

Figure 6: Comparative Mapping: Belfast Ethnic Segregation 1901 (left) and 2001 (right) (Base Map Sources: Barakat 1993; www.irelandstory.com)

While the spatial location of the ‘interfaces’ in Belfast has remained more or less consistent over the past three centuries, it is critical to understand that the physical nature of these areas has changed drastically. Despite the clearly segregated population dispersal that has historically characterized Belfast, as evident in the 1901 mapping of Protestant
and Catholic neighborhoods, Belfast was, up until the 1950s a physically connected city. Residential neighborhoods, through clearly identified as either Protestant or Catholic, were well connected by throughways and commerce, with the ethic populations regularly sharing shopping areas amongst other resources (Boyd 1969). Though these shared spaces, including a well-connected and accessible city center, occasionally served as flash points for the riots listed above, they also were the sites of non-violent intercommunity interaction during times of relative peace. Indeed, as an 1884 mapping of the city center shows, during its period of rapid growth, Belfast remained a well connected grid of streets and avenues, extending out from the city center. (See Figure 7) While this fact may seem insignificant to non-residents, as a local architect expressed, “We who live in Belfast seem to think this city has always been sick. All we know are the cul-de-sacs, walls, and fragmentation. If you told anyone that this city was once an example of a well thought out plan they would call you crazy.” (Interview, M. Hackett)

Independence and Partition

Sectarian tensions continued to grow in the early 20th century and, after the build up to a then seemingly inevitable large-scale conflict was “put on ice” by the outbreak of World War One (McKittrick 2002), the situation finally erupted during the turbulent period directly leading up to, and following the independence of the Republic of Ireland in 1921. The most significant event of this era was the partition of the island of Ireland that followed in 1922, whereby the six northern counties in Ireland with a Protestant majority elected to reject independence from the United Kingdom and thus maintain their ethnic majority, as well as the long established economic ties to the United Kingdom on which the region’s dominant industries relied. The remaining 26 counties to the south became the Republic of Ireland. This period saw levels of violence in Belfast that would not be paralleled again until the Troubles began in the late 1960s, with 544 people killed in numerous incidents and many more forced to flee the city between 1920 and 1922 (Wiener 1976).
It was during this time, as the apparatus of the Northern Irish State was first established, that the formal paramilitary institutions emerged as major entrepreneurs of violence, and sectarianism became firmly embedded within the country’s politics. Central here was the resurgence of the Orange Order, a Protestant organization which had first been founded in 1795 to oppose, often violently, Catholic influence in Irish politics and culture. The ‘Orangemen’ became so well ingrained in the political system of post-partition

Figure 7: Map of Belfast: 1884
Northern Ireland that, between 1921 and 1969, fifty-four of fifty-seven Unionist cabinet ministers openly claimed membership (McKittrick 2002).

In addition, with the new state of Northern Ireland in need of a security force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was established. This police force had a Catholic representation of, at its highest 20%, and by the 1960 only 12% and is largely considered to have been a fundamentally Protestant and sectarian institution, even commonly known to boast an Orange Lodge within its ranks (Ryder 2004). From its inception, the RUC was a primary target of Catholic paramilitary activities and during this same period, through strategic alliances with the Protestant paramilitary groups such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), retribution killings, and the State sponsored suppression of Catholic social movements the RUC were themselves responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Catholic civilians in Belfast alone (Doherty 2004).

What is critical to recognize here is that with the establishment of the Northern Irish State came the formal institutionalization of sectarianism and the violence associated with it. Partition had created a 'dual minority mentality' where by the Protestant population in Northern Ireland saw themselves as a vulnerable minority amongst the larger Catholic population bordering in the Republic, while the Catholic population in the six counties that comprised Northern Ireland made up only one-third of the population and were subject to discriminatory policies on many fronts (Hadden 1994). (See figure 8) Both groups thus perceived themselves as immediately threatened by the other and conflict became the norm; violence an institutionalized and chronic condition rather than a series of episodic crises.

The driver behind urban development of Belfast, meanwhile, underwent a major shift during the first half of the 20th century. The most significant contribution of urban planning to the consolidation of sectarianism in Belfast up until this point had been the

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5 In 2001, the RUC was renamed the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The contentious history of the organization played a part in the delay of political devolution as mentioned in section 1.5.
widespread use of gerrymandering and strategic manipulation of local control over housing allocation by the Protestant powers to insure that the Catholic population, though growing, could not functionally consolidate political power (Wiener 1977, 19). The process of manipulation relied heavily on control over planning power by local elites. However, as the local industries that had anchored growth in the city fell into decline, unable to compete in the increasingly globalized post-War economy, power shifted from a traditionally “landed” political class, based firmly in Orangism, to the British State, which increasingly supported Northern Ireland financially (ibid, 20). During this time planning and development in the city turned towards the attraction of inward and foreign investment as the primary strategy of development and modernization. This process was fully realized with the establishment of the Belfast Planning Commission in 1942, the body charged with implementing the necessary physical changes required to support this new, globalized economic development strategy.

Following the Second World War, the Belfast Planning Commission began the
process of rebuilding which for the first time de-prioritized the interests of the urban Protestant population in favor of restructuring the entire Belfast Metropolitan Region to better suite the needs of international business interests and inward investment\(^6\) (Wiener 1977; Hadden 1994). The ultimate realization of this development logic was the sweeping plans for neighborhood clearance and the construction of the Belfast Urban Motorway, which would eventually slice through the city, encircling the city center and dividing it the traditional neighborhoods to the North and West in order to facilitate the movement of industry and population into new satellite suburbs and specifically selected regional growth hubs (Matthew Plan, 1962).

During this period severe economic decline had brought about high unemployment rates, especially in the traditional industrial sectors on which Belfast's economy had initially been built, with the amount of jobs in textiles and shipbuilding falling from 89,000 to 29,000 between 1950 and 1973 alone. Here a legacy of employment discrimination under the Unionist government aimed at prohibiting Catholics from being employed in these trades meant that the impact of economic decline was particularly hard felt in Protestant communities. The service sector, however, traditionally the main employer of Catholics, was less severely impacted by the decline (Wiener, 23). When asked about the climate of cross-community relations at that time, a life long resident of the Short Strand, noted that "the Protestants were furious. There they had been keeping us out of the trades for years, and all for nothing..." (Short Strand Resident (a), interview)

Ultimately, while the Troubles are famously known for their negative impact on Belfast's urban environment, it was this economic decline, partnered with the prioritization of automobile transit and the restructuring of the regional workforce in the wake of the War that has had the most obvious and destructive impact on the city's fabric. Indeed, a comparison of the city's foot prints in 1910 and 2005 illustrates that, especially for those in North and West Belfast, urban decline and planning policies oriented at shifting the

\(^6\) An 'inward investment' strategy refers to the strategic pursuit of investment from sources based outside the country
Figure 9: Map of Belfast 1910 (Source: Viewed in the Harvard University Map Collection)
Figure 10: Map of Belfast 2005 (Source: Viewed in the Harvard University Map Collection)
population away for the city had left Belfast ‘wounded’ before the Troubles had taken their toll. (See figures 8, 9)

2.3 Irreversible Impacts: Segregation, Violence, and Walling During the Troubles

In the summer of 1969, Belfast entered the period of sustained civil conflict famously known as the Troubles. At this time, economic decline and high levels of unemployment, increasing sectarian tensions, and a growing civil rights movement within the Catholic community erupted in violent clashes at various marches and gatherings throughout the country, culminating in anti-catholic pogroms which saw many residential properties destroyed, explosion from jobs, and numerous deaths in Belfast’s Catholic communities (McKittrick 2002). This period also brought about a significant transformation in the existing Unionist/Nationalist paramilitary conflict as the British Army entered the city as a localized actor in the conflict. While Unionist and Nationalist communities have contending histories of the what events and whose actions sparked the Troubles, the events which followed stand amongst the most immediately relevant determinants of the present day character of Belfast, as well as of Northern Irish politics. For the purpose of this work, the broad impact of the Troubles on the three areas of, urban civil violence, planning, and urban development must be introduced.

Violence:

Between 1969 and 1998 high levels of conflict became the norm on the streets of Belfast. The institutionalized nature of violence, dating back to the 1920s fully articulated itself through four main actors, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Provisional IRA, Protestant Paramilitaries (UDA, UVF as the main factions) and the British Army. Ultimately, the Troubles were responsible for approximately 3,600 violent deaths across Northern Ireland, with approximately 1,400 of those murders occurring on the streets of Belfast.
Overall, within Belfast roughly 20,000 residents were either killed or seriously injured by the violence (Shirlow and Murtagh 2006, 70). While assassinations and executions by paramilitary ‘death squads,’ the RUC, and the British military were responsible for the majority of these incidents, over 10,000 bombs were also set off throughout the country during this period, 70% of which occurred within the Belfast Urban Area (Boal 1995; Bollens 1999).

By 2001, the conflict had prompted the single largest forced migration and population shift in Europe since the Second World War, with some 7,500 families moving from mildly integrated or fringe neighborhoods into well protected enclaves, others leaving the city altogether for ethnically homogeneous suburbs and rural towns (Shirlow and Murtagh 2006, 70). In addition, residences became a primary target during the due to the logic of sectarian violence being largely aimed at the removal of the ‘other’ from the respective community’s perceived territories. Between 1969 and 1975 approximately 25,000 homes were fully or partially destroyed (Calame and Charlesworth 2009, 80).

Here, it is important to note that the trends of urban flight, versus the densification of existing ethnic enclaves within the city were not evenly experienced by the Catholic and Protestant populations, with the Catholic residents tending towards the further densification of enclaves, and the Protestant population experiencing considerable levels of out-migration. Taking into account the similarity of patterns of ethnic segregation in the city in 1901 and 2001 (previously shown in figure 6), there is no doubt that this difference in out-migration and densification represents the most significant impact of the Troubles on Belfast’s ethnic demographics and continued territorial conflict.

Planning and Politics:

Due to the increasingly uncontrollable levels of violence in Belfast, the British Parliament, asserting that the existing Unionist government in Northern Ireland was no
longer able to rule effectively and in an unbiased manner, implemented ‘Direct Rule’ from Westminster, dissolving local political institutions and planning authority completely in 1973. With regard to the issues of redevelopment, and planning addressed in this thesis, Direct Rule had two critical impacts:

First, due to continuing pressure of sectarian violence and the government functions were consolidated under the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). This centralization of power within the NIO allowed for the assertion to be made that critical distributive decisions where being made in a neutral manner. Despite this extreme centralization, the wide ranging impacts of the Troubles created an atmosphere of uncoordinated policy agendas as each department found its own internal logic of how to address and navigate the conflict in their everyday work, without any overarching framework to address “comprehensively the nature of the conflict.” (Brand et al. 2008, 33). The paradox of an increasing inter-departmental silo mentality developing within a centralized governing institution is directly attributable to the desire of individual government departments, from roads services to policing, to accommodate the contending constituencies while advancing policies that would be unobjectionable to both parties; with policy thus driven by expediency at every level rather than a unified strategy (Brand et al. 2008, 68-70).

Two departments created under the centralized NIO during Direct Rule have played a particularly controversial a role in guiding the cities urban development. The creation of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) represented a high profile transition due to the widespread practices of gerrymandering that had historically characterized local, Unionist, control over housing, though the neutrality of the body has been regularly questioned. This complete removal of planning powers from local councils and communities throughout Belfast, and the subsequent marginalization of local institutions

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8 This ‘neutral’ position on planning was generally based on the concept of even allocations to Protestant and Catholic communities across the board. Many authors have highlighted the inherent issues with fifty-fifty neutrality in producing just outcomes considering Belfast’s complicated demographics and its history of sectarian discrimination (Bollens 1999).
(a condition which lasted more than thirty-seven years), is commonly blamed for what many now feel is a continual “low-caliber” of local bureaucracy in today’s Northern Ireland, especially within the housing and development realm (Bew and Gillespie 1999, xi). When interviewed, planners, developers, politicians, and community workers alike all pointed towards the departmental fragmentation and internal siloing which was born out of the Troubles as the primary challenge to tackling issues of urban regeneration, security, and deprivation in the city. As City Councilor and member of the Belfast City Council’s Development Committee, Tom Ekin, (interview) commented; “Its no surprise we can’t get anything done, we are all behind our walls, literally and figuratively, doing our own work and ignoring each other.”

This fragmented structure of governance has also had a profound impact the way that the destruction of the urban environment was handled during the height of the Troubles. Deirdre Mac Bride, a consultant on housing and security issues in North Belfast pointed out that this lack of coordination effected even the most basic functions: “the silos were such that nobody was making the connection between things like, a house losing a window costs us how much money, and how you might try to save that money in the first place by redirecting some at stopping that sort of thing happening to begin with.” (interview, D. Mac Bride) This condition has persisted today, where institutional structuring remains such that “people can cooperate at the edges of their responsibilities and at the edges of their budgets but...the way that the public funding was organized during the period when everything was first centralized does not enable them to cooperate on their core activities.” (D. Mac Bride, interview) According to K. Sterrett (then DOENI, current professor of Town Planning, QUB) this departmental dysfunction was increasingly mirrored by the proliferation of various community groups during this period, creating a challenging environment for communication between ‘bottom up’ and ‘top down’ actors. “Statutory agencies always say there are too many community groups, but they need that many just to match all the various government departments they interact with.” (K. Sterrett,
Second, under Direct Rule, interface security and walling were designated as issues of ‘national security’ to the broader United Kingdom. This means that all decisions about when, where, and how to physically separate Catholic and Protestant communities have fallen to the counter terrorism branch of the British Security Service since the emergence of the Troubles. Decisions are coordinated within Northern Ireland by the NIO, relying on no local consultation aside from a police security assessment. This condition continues today with no plan of devolution and, as this thesis shows, creates significant challenges to coordinated development around interface areas.

**Urban and Economic Development**

Belfast’s urban and economic development during the period of the Troubles is marked by stagnation, decline, and heavy government and international subsidy aimed at propping up an otherwise failing state. In their seminal study on the economic impacts of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, Deloitte (2007) thoroughly analyze the economic toll that the sectarian divide and violence has extracted on comprehensive list of public and private sectors in comparison to similar UK economies, concluding that the sectarian divide was directly responsible for 1.5 billion pounds in additional public sector expenditures necessary to make up for lagging sectors and unique security needs. Government expenditure on housing alone is inflated by 24 million due to the replication infrastructure as well as the addition of new the housing stock in certain areas while apartments sit empty in others; unutilized due to nuances in demographic and sectarian geography. Adding to Belfast’s existing economic decline was the loss of over 800 jobs between 1971 to 1975 “through the permanent closure of sixteen companies as a direct result of civil disturbance,” (Doherty 1982, 229), amongst the estimated 27,600 jobs lost between 1983 – 2000 (Deloitte 2007).
Though very little new development was formally undertaken during the height of the Troubles, physical alterations to the city were abundant. Beginning with the employment of makeshift barriers and barricades between Unionist and Nationalist communities to prevent 'invasion' by one group into the other's territory, these peacelines were quickly formalized by the British Army in the early 1970s. As figure 11 shows, the use of partition was widespread, and has continued over the past forty years, drastically altering Belfast's urban landscape.

Figure 11: Belfast Interface Project Peaceline Map (Source: Belfast Interface Project)

Though high levels of residential segregation have always existed, the introduction of the peacelines during this period, originally viewed as temporary measures, had a profound impact on the chronic nature of conflict in the city. While largely successful in
separating the two communities, the walling quickly formalized the conceptualization of ‘ethnic’ space as directly linked to the perception of acute intercommunity ‘besiegement.” (Shirlow, 2003, 78) As artifacts, the peacelines also lent a spatial logic to the violence, becoming the locations where “frequent, persistent, and recurrent” conflict, both low-level and deadly, took place (Shirlow and Murtagh 2006, 72).

In light of this strong historical correlation, it is no surprise that, in present-day Belfast, conflict remains spatially tied to the interface areas, and peacelines in particular. Further, since the peacelines first began appearing 1970s as a response to high intensity intercommunity violence, there is now an entire generation that has grown up never knowing a Belfast without the presence of physical partition. As a middle aged resident in
the Protestant Lower Shankill neighborhood commented,

“For those of us who remember life without the walls, there is still the issue of who lives on the other side? You don’t know the people who live thirty yards away from you. We’ve lived literally a stone’s throw from each other for thirty years but never met. But at least we know its just another part of the city over there, we can remember that; for the younger generation I think it’s a bit of a black whole.” (Resident, Lower Shankill, interview)

2.4 Chapter Summary:

Conflict in Belfast has long been, and continues to be, a chronic condition. This chronicity can be observed in the long history of individual but largely identical incidents dating back to the 1800s, the statistical realities of the Troubles, and the continued persistence of low-level sectarian violence despite official paramilitary disarmament and a national level peace process. As Estroff (Estroff 1993, 250) argues, this aspect of chronicity is characterized by the “persistence in time of limitations and suffering.” That said, it is not only the length and intensity of the conflict that distinguish the nature of chronic violence in Belfast. What is more important is the level to which violence and urban civil conflict has become institutionalized; first within a cyclical and persistent pattern of rioting and organized intergroup hostility during Belfast’s emergence as an industrial capital, followed by a further entrenching and exacerbation of these patterns within the Northern Irish state (itself born out of a fundamentally unresolved conflict in 1922), and finally in significant physical and structural manifestations of the conflict that began with the Troubles and remains today.

Here an added dimension of chronicity is evident through the “temporal persistence of dysfunction” (Estroff 1993, 259) that has characterized the physical and institutional structure of Belfast. As Ruane and Todd (2001, 938) comment, even with the emergence of a national level peace process in Northern Ireland, “powerful structurally based tendencies towards conflict still remain” creating an environment where “crises are not simply transitory, but endemic.” Conflict in Belfast can thus be considered chronic because it
has become culturally and politically institutionalized, with intergroup hostility acting as the main driver the city’s demographic and physical character, while being simultaneous reproduced by it.

Yet conflict in Belfast, and Northern Ireland more generally, has not occurred within a vacuum. As this section 2.2 of chapter outlined, the nature of conflict in Belfast has been directly conditioned by the boom and bust trajectory of urban and economic development. As the city grew, so did the intercommunity tension and levels of violent conflict. In addition, while the impacts of the 1969-1998 Troubles are commonly put forward as the primary factors in Belfast’s demographic ‘hollowing out’ and present-day economic difficulties, it is important to recognize that these processes in fact predate the Troubles as part of a larger tend of post-industrial decline and economic restructuring.

Ultimately, it is critical to understand that the ethno-sectarian crisis in Belfast is endemic, not episodic. Just as it is vital to situate the conflict in within its specific ‘context,’ it is equally necessary acknowledge that conflict, when protracted, is itself a context (Vigh 2008). This understanding will inform the investigation into the ongoing management of Belfast’s interface areas in the following section, underlining that the wider context of chronic violence has shaped local level physical outcomes.

Chapter 3: Managing the Divide – Interface Development and Conflict in Post Peace Treaty Belfast

“When it isn’t the war, its the peaceline that has an impact on the way that people make decisions around here” (D. Mac Bride, interview)

3.1 Chapter Overview

Within the context of chronic violence and the historical trajectories laid out in the previous chapter, sections 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 of this chapter present three individual case
studies of redevelopment efforts at the interface of Unionist and Nationalist neighborhoods in Belfast. Each case is examined with regard to context, actors, and outcomes associated with attempts to alter the physical environment in order to mitigate violence and reverse the condition of deterioration that characterizes interface zones throughout Belfast. All three interfaces have a long history of conflict, management, and adaptation and each is anchored by at least one official peaceline structure.

These case studies illuminate the various ways in which conflict has conditioned the physical space at distinct interfaces in Belfast, and how these physical adaptations continue to influence redevelopment around them long after they are initially implemented. Emphasis is put on understanding how the physical redevelopment outcomes in these areas have been impacted by the condition of ‘fragmentation’ which characterizes both the neighborhood-level organizations, where the proliferation of community groups outlined in the previous chapter has produced influential local actors on each side of the divide, as well as at the relevant government agencies, each reacting to the constant threat of violence through their own, uncoordinated policies and projects. Ultimately it is argued that, under these conditions of conflict and fragmentation, redevelopment efforts around the three interfaces have consistently led to a further entrenching of the sectarian divide and a perpetuation of ‘territory’ as a central articulation of the continuing sectarian conflict.

The case studies: The Madrid Street interface in the East Belfast neighborhood of the Short Strand; The Northgate Business Park, located between Protestant Tigers Bay and Catholic New Lodge in North Belfast, and the Stewartstown Road interface, which divides the Protestant enclave of Suffolk from the Catholic Lenadoon estate in West Belfast, represent dissimilar locations within a common context of chronic violence. (See Figure 13)

While background on each interface is given, all information on the pre-1988 condition of the physical peacelines themselves is based on unofficial reports from the period, as well as interviews with residents who witnessed their development. This
reliance on secondary material is due to the fact that the original peaceline development was carried out by the British military, in many cases formalizing and reinforcing informal, community constructed barricades, and no records of this work exists (G. Barbour, NIO, interview). In 1988, however, the responsibilities were handed over to a department.

Figure 13: Case Study Context Map
within the NIO, which has since maintained the existing structures and overseen the construction of all new official peacelines. Despite the official management of the peacelines, there is presently no official government map showing the location of each peaceline, so independent mappings were conducted as part of this research.

In section 3.5, I summarize the common traits shared across each case, and argue that these outcomes are best understood within the framework of the 'ratchet effect,' whereby, though the varying attempts at managing the interface have had produced different impacts on regeneration and cross-community interaction, each case displays how the initial partition, once implemented, has served as a new baseline to be extended, reinforced or adapted but never transformed or removed even following considerable reductions in violence.

3.2 The Short Strand: Development at the Madrid Street Interface

This case study examines the process through which the Madrid Street interface between Catholic/Nationalist enclave of the Short Strand and the neighboring Newtownards Road, Protestant/Unionist community has been increasingly fortified and partitioned during past decade, despite the official ceasefire and declining rates of violent conflict in the area. Emphasis is placed on the failure of the NIHE, NIO, Short Strand Community Forum, and Department of Social Development (DSD) to implement a proposed plan which would have revitalized and redeveloped housing around the interface while simultaneously providing design features aimed at reducing sectarian conflict without the implementation of a formal partition. Rather, it is show that due to the fragmented and uncoordinated responses to periodic outbursts of violence, a physical partition was implemented, closing Madrid Street and further entrenching the social and territorial division between the two communities.
3.2.1 Interface Context

Located on the edge of the Lagan River, which divides West and East Belfast, the Short Strand neighborhood stands as the most isolated Catholic housing estate in the Protestant East Belfast. The Short Strand community, comprised of 800 dwellings and housing 2,500 people, is physically constrained by the river to its west, and the sectarian constraint of the broader community of 60,000 Protestant Unionists that surround to the east.

The presence of a Catholic community in the Short Strand area dates back 250 years and has been a site of sectarian violence throughout its history. The neighborhood was a main target for Protestant paramilitary activity during the 1920s' post independence period, aimed at expelling the Catholic population of East Belfast, and later became synonymous with the Provisional IRA during the early years of the Troubles. Namely, in 1970 the 'Battle of St. Matthews,' a gunfight in which, by popular account, a small number of IRA men were able to defend the Short Strand from Protestant Paramilitary invasion, set the tone for the siege mentality which continues to characterized the neighborhood's
interaction with the surrounding Unionist community.

While East Belfast, due to its otherwise homogeneous Protestant population, has always experienced lower rates of violence than West and North Belfast, accounting for only 9.1 percent of the city's fatalities during the Troubles, the vast majority of these deaths occurred in or around the Catholic enclave of the Short Strand, making residents disproportionately likely to have experienced violence (Shirlow and Murtagh 2006, 73).

Due to the neighborhoods precarious positioning within the larger Unionist territory, walls and barricades were quickly constructed at the outbreak of the Troubles, effectively encircling the entire site – a unique condition even within Belfast's many walled areas.

![Short Strand Map 2005](image.png)

Figure 14: Short Strand Map 2005 (Peacelines marked in Red)

The main walls, especially at the Cluan Place and Bryson Street interfaces, continued to be adapted, principally through increases in height, between 1970 and 2003. The initial walling and increased sectarian violence was accompanied by demographic shifts in the
area, with 98 families relocating from Madrid Street/Bryson Street area in August of 1971 alone. Of this migration 75% was comprised of Protestant families, the majority of which were retreating further into East Belfast (Community Relations Commission Research Unit, 1971). During this time the housing along Madrid Street was largely abandoned, but the street itself remained the only physical connection between the two communities.

Because of its unique standing as the only direct spatial connection between the Short Strand and the Unionist neighborhoods to the east, the area where Madrid Street historically interrupted the otherwise impenetrable Bryson Street and Cluan Place partitions has come to exemplify the nature of contested space in Belfast. Despite declining rates of violence in East Belfast, Madrid Street remains the site of regular but isolated outbursts of sectarian conflict, especially during the ‘marching season’ in the summer months. The area more generally is also the site of regular ‘displays’ of competing national and ethnic identities. (See Figures 16, 17) Finally, while both communities have recovered to some extent from the demographic shift during the 1970s, the housing directly abutting the Madrid Street interface has remained empty in both communities well into the post-peace treaty era due to the continued threat of property damage.
3.2.2 Redevelopment Efforts, Actors and Outcomes

In the past decade, as levels of violent conflict declined in the Short Strand, attention was turned to the physical and social redevelopment of the neighborhood, which had suffered considerably on both fronts due to extreme levels of isolation during the Troubles. In particular, the community’s central concern has been expanding its limited housing stock, as the local youth grow up to find increasingly little room to accommodate them within the bounds of the Short Strand and are forced to leave the neighborhood. "If you talk to people around here, they will tell you that what we need are houses for our kids." (Short Strand Resident (b), interview)

The group leading this effort to bring redevelopment to the community, particularly concerned with addressing the issue of housing, was the Short Strand Community Forum (SSCF), an umbrella organization formed in 1981 to coordinate the work of the 28 active community groups within the neighborhood. Building on the success of a cross-community partnership established with similar organizations in the surrounding Protestant communities to mitigate levels of youth violence around the Madrid Street, the SSCF hired an architect to design a site plan for the Madrid Street interface which would maintain the street as a throughway between the communities, while providing for the renovation and redevelopment of three to four new residences on each side of the divide. Hedging and street trees were to be strategically utilized to limit the sightline and automobile access between the neighborhoods, but otherwise the road would continue to serve as the central gateway between the Catholic and Protestant areas (Madrid Street Redevelopment Plan, viewed on site).

The plan was viewed by both communities as an opportunity to increase and renew the housing stock on Madrid Street, but more importantly as a conscious attempt to

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9 It is important to note that Belfast is characterized by a culture of living close to one’s nuclear family, even in adulthood, most residents chose to live within just a few blocks of their families. This tendency was further instilled during the Troubles when mobility was severely limited. Short Strand Community Forum currently has a list of 200 families waiting to be housed.
regenerate the built environment around the interface and neutralize the use of the space as a flashpoint for sectarian conflict (F. Brennan, interview). Critical to the plan was the equal provision of single-identity (Catholic or Protestant) housing, strictly maintaining the existing ethnic neighborhood boundaries rather than attempting to implement an integrated housing plan.

Though the SSCF developed the plan with its own resources, it was shared with the Department of Social Development (DSD), the statutory agency responsible for the supporting efforts at physical regeneration and neighborhood renewal throughout Northern Ireland, in 2001 with the hopes of attaining the necessary funding to accomplish the project. “They seemed excited. It’s not everyday that DSD sees a plan with the support of both communities, so we were confident that they would jump at it.” (F. Brennan, interview)

**Deterioration.**

These plans, however, were put on hold in 2002 when large-scale rioting broke out in and around the Short Strand, drawing major media coverage due to the clear involvement of IRA, UDA, and UVF paramilitary soldiers, and casting into question the durability of the official nation-wide 1998 paramilitary ceasefire. The Guardian Newspaper reported that 34 houses were seriously damaged in the Short Strand during four days of Paramilitary supported conflict, with numerous people injured by gunfire, petrol bombs, and rioting which involved over 1000 people (Bowcott and McDonald 2002). Once again, the Short Strand found itself at the center of the National sectarian conflict and during this period cross-community relations deteriorated, with the area’s historic disposition towards physical partition reemerging. Though the rioting lasted only four days, the physical alterations that it engendered have had a long-term effect on redevelopment efforts in the area.
NIO Partition

“In 2002, people went to their community leaders to say that they didn’t feel safe living near the Madrid Street interface. There were houses attacked, bottles put through their windows, petrol bombs thrown and people just didn’t feel safe at night sleeping so both communities agreed that there would need to be some sort of short term measure.” (Short Strand Resident (b), interview)

As the body overseeing security at Northern Ireland’s many interfaces, the Northern Ireland Office were responsible for addressing the requests for measures to reduce the potential for future conflict at the Madrid Street interface. Following their standard process, the NIO commissioned a security assessment from the police; on which decisions of whether or not to implement a physical peaceline have traditionally been “100% dependant” (Gail Barbour Interview).

In this case, it was decided that a tall gate would be installed across Madrid Street where it transitions from the Short Strand into the adjoining Protestant neighborhood, enabling the police to close off the area whenever trouble was anticipated. Despite the fact

Figure 18: Madrid Street NIO Peaceline Gate 2002 (Source: Belfast Interface Project)
that a gate had been chosen specifically because it would maintain the integrity of Madrid Street as a crucial throughway (G. Barbour, interview), residents from both communities reported that, once installed, the gate was never opened, effectively extending the Bryson Street peaceline. (See Figure 18.) It did not take long for the Short Strand community to return to travel patterns which had characterized life during the Troubles; namely with those who, during the period of the Paramilitary ceasefire, would have increasingly passed through that area in order to shop at nearby stores in the Unionist community once again choosing to travel across the Lagan River into the city center to shop (F. Brennan, interview).

This type of action speaks directly to the ingrained nature of violence in post-peace treaty Belfast. Though there was no immediate need for the gate by the time it was installed, months after the four-day period of rioting which had prompted its initial discussion, the view held within the community was that the violence would inevitably repeat itself and so ought to be preempted. As a local Short Strand resident recounted; “We were under the impression that the gate was a temporary measure, it was supposed to stay closed when there were problems and then when there wasn’t, it would be open. And there will always be problems, so why not install it.” (Short Strand Resident (b), Interview)

NIHE Fortification

The situation at the Madrid Street interface took an unexpected turn when the NIO’s official peaceline gate was subsequently walled in on both sides by the NIHE during a period of small-scale housing rehabilitation in the area in 2005. With the plan to regenerate the area stalled, some of the residents who lived near the new NIO gate reached out to the NIHE, who manage most of the properties, for assistance in implementing minor renovations to their properties. During their assessment, the NIHE took it upon themselves to “improve the appearance of the area” by constructing a wall around the NIO’s gate and in doing so curbed Madrid Street, turning it 45 degrees to meet Bryson Street (F. Brennan, interview).
interview). (See Figure 19)

"It's really amazing, the NIHE never consulted us [NIO], or anyone else as for all I know, and yet its like the street never existed now, and we can't even access our own gate to maintenance it, let alone open the thing." (G. Barbour, interview) Indeed, this action, though insignificant with respect to movement patterns and immediate inter-community interactions, is now proving to have profound impacts on the present-day and future management of the area.

Figure 19: Madrid Street Partition - June 2009 condition. View from Short Strand. Note where curb stones lighten original Madrid Street has been rerouted, turning left onto Bryson Street rather than continuing into neighboring community.

According to community canvassing conducted by the Short Strand Community Forum, nearby residents on both sides of the divide are now in favor of keeping the peaceline permanently, as they feel safer with it in place and today, after the NIHE's walling
of the original peace line, the initial SSCF housing regeneration plan is no longer considered a viable option by the Short Strand community. “Obviously we would love to see some much needed housing on a revitalized Madrid Street instead of a gate and a wall, but we have no option but to prioritize the feelings of those folks who live on the interface. Their well-being has to come first.” (F. Brennan, interview) In this case, from the perspective of those local residents it is simply remains “easier to not see your neighbor than to get to know and trust them.” (Short Strand Resident, interview)

Assessing Impacts:

The Madrid Street partitions constructed since 2002 can be seen as the final step in the process of near complete physical separation of the Short Strand neighborhood from the larger Protestant community surrounding it which began during the 1970s. What is important to understand is why and how this process of partition continued during the period of relative peace, rather than remaining static or receding as cross-community communication became more common and relationships began to normalize. The outcome, thus, must be considered not only with regard to what impact the adaptation and fortification of the Madrid Street interface has had on long-term efforts to redevelop the area and transform the interface into the type of functioning, ‘relational’ space that is alluded to in section 1.1 (p. 11), but also with regard to what it illustrates about the fragmented and uncoordinated nature of those agents responsible for affecting change at the interface.

The main statutory actors in this case are the NIHE, the NIO, DSD, and the SSCF; each charged with its own specific responsibilities, but sharing a common interest in the revitalization of the Short Strand neighborhood and the area around it. However, the lack of coordination amongst the government agencies engaged in the redevelopment, as outlined in section 2.3 of the previous chapter, produced an outcome, which I argue, reflects the type of expedient response to the threat of violence that characterized policy making during the
height of the Troubles, and one which will have a lasting impact on the physical and social isolation of the Short Strand, further entrenching the sectarian divide.

First and foremost, the NIO's complete dependence on the security assessment in determining the suitability of partition demonstrates a concerning lack of coordination with DSD and the NIHE, not to mention other central government agencies such as The Planning Service and The Road Service whose day-to-day work would be impacted by the closing of a road and significant alterations to the built environment. Critically, had the NIO's process of assessing and reacting to the conflict in 2002 involved any consultation with the SSCF, as the primary representative body for the Short Strand Community, or the DSD, charged with the creation of "safer environments in the most deprived neighborhoods," (DSD 2003) coordination around the community based plan for a revitalized and connected street might have been possible. Here, the legacy of sustained violent conflict is evident in the fact that, due to its history of intervening in extremely difficult and acute conditions during the Troubles, the NIO continues to operate under emergency powers legislation connected to the British Government's Terrorism Act, enabling the agency to act without attaining planning permission for any structure, regardless of its size and impact (G. Barbour, Interview).

This fragmented decision making process is again evident in the NIHE's autonomous decision to construct a wall around the NIO gate in order to improve the physical appearance of the new interface, disregarding considerations of the gates purpose as a nonpermanent partition. While the Madrid Street instance was the first time that the NIO has actually been walled out of their own peaceline, they are now commonly being publicly held responsible for the construction of partitions which they in fact have no hand in as incidents of private walling and gating are becoming increasingly common as well as increasingly uncoordinated:

"A wall has just recently gone up in the Ardoyne, an area of North Belfast where
there is some redevelopment going on. A private developer has put in a new wall there. We had a call from the North Belfast News a few weeks ago saying 'you've built another peace wall here,' and it is at an interface area, but it's the private developer that has built the wall. It has nothing to do with us. Again, it's back to the new divisionary kinds of walls, your gated communities and things like that, it's not us.” (G. Barbour, Interview)

While, from the NIO’s perspective, and in accordance with its rather limited mandate, these issues simply present procedural difficulties; their impacts are much farther reaching for the kinds of holistic redevelopment that is being called for in these areas by high profile policy documents such as the OFMDFM’s (2005) “A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland” which aim at encouraging the proliferation of ‘shared space’ and cross-community initiatives to respond to sectarian tensions.

Finally, beyond the procedural challenges which set the stage for the construction and fortification of the Madrid Street peaceline, the impact of closing off the final spatial link between the communities has had a significant impact on the views of the “other” amongst each of the two communities. While residents were just becoming comfortable entering into the neighboring communities in the years since the ceasefire, this trend was “completely reversed” by the implementation of the wall, as the territorial logic of the sectarian conflict was further reenforced, especially amongst Protestant and Catholic youth, for whom trespassing into neighborhoods clearly marked as the territory of the ‘other’ is particularly dangerous due to a common perception that they are “looking for trouble.” (F. Brennan, interview)

This is a case illustrates two critical points: First, this processes of fortification stands as an example of the on-the-ground impacts of the legacy of fragmentation and internally siloed working structures of Belfast’s public sector alluded to in the previous section and illustrates that this adaptation to the context of chronic violence during the Troubles still remains a major obstacle to coordinated and forwarded looking physical
interventions at the local scale in Belfast.

Second, these interventions can have the long-term impact of negating community driven development schemes, such as the Short Strand community's hope to see the area regenerated with housing and landscaping considerations. The additional walling of the site not only added a layer of physical division, it erased Madrid Streets function as a throughway and created redundant infrastructure on each side of the divide. Despite levels of sectarian conflict now relatively low, and characterized by brief and periodic outburst, the common understanding that Madrid Street represented an 'interface' and thus would always be subject to violence precluded serious attempts to address the 2002 riots in an alternative manner; reinforcing the notion that the endemic and persistent nature of violent conflict examined in the previous chapter continues to influence decision making at the neighborhood level.

3.4

Figure 20: Bryson Street Peaceline, Short Strand
3.4.1 Interface Context:

In his seminal work on planning and conflict in Belfast, Scott Bollens (1999) provides an in-depth account of the persistent and unparalleled violence that took place at the interface between the Protestant community of Tigers Bay and the Catholic New Lodge estate during the Troubles. Like the majority of North Belfast, these communities originally sprung up during the period of rapid industrialization in the late 19th century, comprised mainly of low grade housing for workers employed by the factories that located in the area due to its close proximity to the industrial docks and the Lagan River. Historically there was very little violence in the area before the emergence of the widespread 1920/1922 conflicts.
surrounding Irish independence. However, after being significantly damaged during the Second World War’s Luftwaffe Blitz in 1941, the redevelopment of the area in the 1950s brought with it a higher density of Catholic residents to the New Lodge area, creating the obvious divide between Protestant Tigers Bay and Catholic New Lodge which exists today, with its interface later formalized at Duncairn Gardens Street during the population shifts caused by the onset Troubles.

The areas surrounding the permanently walled interface, which runs the length of Duncairn Gardens Street in North Belfast and dates back to the early 1970s, single-handedly accounted for 20% of all sectarian murders during the Troubles. The violence was mirrored in levels of dereliction and vacancy at the interface, where “27% of interface frontage had been demolished; and 32% of all properties, and 43% of commercial properties, were vacant” by 1990 (Bollens 1999). That said, the most considerable shifts in the demographics and density of the neighborhood occurred, as with the majority of Belfast, within the first years of the Troubles.

According to the Community Relations Research Unit’s 1971 Report on Population Movement (1971) the residential out-migration from the Duncairn Gardens area was comprised of mainly of Protestants families retreating into more homogeneous areas of North Belfast, creating an extremely ‘hollowed out’ and vulnerable Unionist community in the area. Indeed, by 1990, 40% of the housing in Tigers Bay was abandoned, much of it having been severely damaged during the early years of the conflict (Bollens 1999, 105). As with all of the particularly embattled and threatened territories in Belfast, Tigers Bay and the New Lodge quickly became paramilitary strongholds, with the UDA the dominant political and security institution in Tigers Bay, and the Provisional IRA in the New Lodge neighborhood.

3.4.2 Redevelopment Efforts, Actors and Outcomes:

Desperate to mitigate the pattern of regular and high profile violence at the interface
between Tigers Bay and New Lodge, a process was set in motion by the NIHE and the DSD\textsuperscript{10} to create a 'buffer zone' between the communities that would simultaneously act as an economic stimulus. The project represented a significant risk for the two public bodies who, along with the rest of the public sector, were traditionally characterized by a reluctance to engage with any form of active "social geographic engineering" aimed at moving peacelines in order to redevelop space or mitigate violence. (Jarman, N. and O'halloran, C. 2001: 2)

The 'Northgate Business Center' planning process represented the first coordinated effort to engage local communities in planning around "interface issues." That said, the

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\textsuperscript{10} Then known as the Belfast Development Office (BDO)
statutory agencies leading the process were themselves unsure as to what the intended outcome was, framing the project as simply aimed at creating a ‘buffer’ between the two groups at inter-agency meetings, while simultaneously employing community organizers and consultants to pitch the economic benefit that a business center would bring to both communities at various community meetings (D. Mac Bride, community consultant for Northgate development, interview). This dichotomy represents the two established approaches that the DSD had conceived of to address development at the interface; ‘wedge planning’ representing the tactic of buffering the communities, and ‘facilitating growth’ referring to an approach aimed at creating an economically beneficial use in the area.

The final plan, completed in 1990, called for the demolition of 380 houses in Tigers Bay, with roughly 125 to be replaced elsewhere in the estate. On the open land, an economic development district, or ‘enterprise park’ was to be constructed in order to bring a new “neutral and mutually beneficial” territory into the Duncairn Gardens interface (Bollens 1999, 105). Though the true intent of the intervention may better be understood as fundamentally aimed at “re-housing the protestant population further back from the interface, and buying the them time to regenerate and to rethink about their community.” (D. Mac Bride, interview).

Deterioration:

Despite the coordinated partnership between the NIHE and the DSD in this case, the Belfast’s legacy of severe social and spatial divisions once again played a role in dictating the outcome of the Northgate project as local communities, unsatisfied with the agencies’ combined lack of clarity in relating the purpose of the plan, quickly became a major obstacle to the project’s implementation, filing parallel objections against the scheme with the NIHE. Because both Tigers Bay and New Lodge were at the time controlled by powerful paramilitary leadership it was widely accepted that no alterations could be made to the interface without full community support for fear of violent retaliation (K. Sterrett,
interview). Though the nature of the community objections were not sectarian, “people just weren’t sure what the point of the project was...why move a peaceline a couple streets back if the communities wouldn’t benefit somehow,” (D. Mac Bride, interview) the fact that they were being asserted by community groups dominated by paramilitary representation meant that there was a very little room for cross-community cooperation aimed at clarifying community desires or improving the plan.

In retrospect, Deirdre Mac Bride, who worked with both communities at the time, points out that both the New Lodge and Tigers Bay community groups had the common hope that the space, if altered, might be used for a jobs training center, or some other, locally oriented use, but the extreme level of isolation that the two communities operated under meant that these aspirations were never meaningfully shared (D. Mac Bride, interview). Ultimately, the NIHE and DSD continued meeting individually with the two communities and were able to appease each individually to the extent that after ten weeks the objections were withdrawn and the project went forward as originally planned, focusing on the ‘wedge’ plan of neutral, disembedded infrastructure as a buffer zone.

Assessing Impacts:

Now, nearly 20 years on from its development, opinions on the outcomes of the Northgate Business Park project are strongly divided. On the one hand, the enterprise park has been successful in keeping full tenancy, and the area immediately surrounding the development, though presently encircled with walls and fencing developed privately by the business park managers, is no longer a central flash point for rioting and conflict. In this way, the intervention can be seen as successful in creating a new dynamic in the area; the nearby housing is occupied, the streets well kept. On the other hand, the project is commonly seen as merely having pushed back the interface, and its associated violence, rather than eliminating it or transforming the spatial relationship between the two communities (K. Sterrett, Interview). In addition, the park has not brought many benefits
to the local community because its not necessarily local people that are working in it. Billy Hutchinson (interview), a long time community worker in neighboring Protestant neighborhood of Mount Vernon, points out that this has been, in his opinion, the main failing of the majority of redevelopment efforts in North Belfast, the section of the city where deprivation levels are most extreme; unemployment rates reaching 70% in certain communities.

Northgate's legacy, however, extends beyond its perceived 'employment disconnect' with the surrounding communities. Within the past decade, the development has also had a considerably negative impact on perceptions within the Tigers Bay Community as to what the concepts of 'shared space' and comprehensive interface redevelopment mean in practice. Indeed, the Northgate development's lack of connectivity to the community in which it directly sits has engendered a felling of lose within the remaining residents. When asked if he thought the Northgate Business Park was, overall, an asset, Tigers Bay community worker, Jon Howcroft, (interview) responded:

"No. It's fed into people fears. It was a solution at a difficult time...It was a solution, it was a buffer, a barrier...which removed something like 200 – 300 houses to accommodate the business park, and that's actually not helped people because, for where we are trying to move today, its actually fed into the existing fears that a 'shared future' is about losing something. It's not about sharing something; it's about someone losing something. Them gaining and us losing."

This fear that 'redevelopment' represents loss is now pervasive, especially throughout working class Protestant communities, which tend to occupy far less of their established territory than their Catholic equivalents due to the high levels of outmigration that the community experienced during the Troubles outlined in section 2.3. Viewing redevelopment as inherently producing disconnected 'buffer zones' or the gated communities of a 'non-local' middle class, the Tigers Bay community is currently resistant to invite this process into their neighborhood again.
Perhaps most critically though, the perceived loss of Protestant territory which followed the development of the Northgate Business Park has left Tigers Bay residents increasingly inclined towards defending their remaining territory and the neighborhood continues to be a center for violent sectarian incidents, with the majority of these incidents carried out due to the belief that the threat of violence constitutes the most effective means to maintain the territorial integrity of Tigers Bay (J. Howcroft, interview). Indeed in a recent 2006 study of youth attitudes in the area, the fear of further Catholic encroachment is repeatedly referred to as the reason behind continued sectarian violence (McEvoy-Levy 2006, 139-171)

3.3: The Suffolk / Lenadoon Interface: The Stewartstown Road Redevelopment Project

Interface Context:

The Suffolk housing estate was developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s and marked early Protestant, working class expansion into what was then largely rural West Belfast (See Figure 23). With the Troubles forcing a massive portion of Belfast’s Catholic population from their homes, the area immediately surrounding Suffolk, and a significant portion of the development itself, became the destination for many of the displaced Catholic families due to its proximity to the traditional Catholic heartland of the Falls Road in West Belfast.

The events which brought about the formation of the ‘interface’ between what are now the Protestant Suffolk and Catholic Lenadoon housing estates were simultaneously characterized by the violent ‘invasion’ of Catholic families into the area on one hand, and the carefully managed relocation of Protestant families into other estates in the city and nearby satellite towns on the other. Over a five-year period some 550 Protestant families
were forced from their homes on the north side of Stewartstown Road, the community’s historic spine.

Jean Brown, an original resident of the Suffolk estate since 1952, and now Community Development Director for the Suffolk Community Forum, described the process as unique in that,

"In other parts of Belfast houses were being petro bombed and destroyed, here that didn’t happen because the Catholic families wanted them to move into. They would have been literally driving lorry loads of furniture around the streets, picking the house that they wanted to live in. They would come up and wrap the door and say be out by tonight for we are moving in...” (J. Brown, interview)

The surprising lack of large-scale destruction and violence was also due to a well organized, albeit covert agreement between the British Army and the Republican movement, whereby British soldiers were actually instructed to encourage, at times through acts of controlled intimidation such as breaking house windows and setting fire
to owners cars and lawns, Protestant families to vacate the area, while the Republican organizers had Catholic families, themselves forced to flee from predominantly Protestant areas, ready to move into the empty homes. By 1975, as the final Protestant families relocated out of the area or to the portion of the estate directly to the south of Stewartstown Road, all that remained of Suffolk estate was approximately 900 residents occupying 524 dwellings, now directly abutting a Catholic population roughly 10,000 strong (Barakat 1993). During this period, Stewartstown Road became formalized as the interface, the line over which neither population was to expand.

Once the demographic shift was consolidated, in order to formalize the physical divide, corrugated galvanized iron fences were installed throughout the mid 1970s in order to separate the communities to the North and South of Stewartstown Roads, specifically aimed at eliminating visual contact, as well as the exchange of projectile weapons between the communities. Interrupting these walls, directly fronting Stewartstown Road, an entire terrace of nine dwellings was left, uninhabited aside from a Housing Executive sub-office, forming an alternative barricade between the communities (See Figure 24).

Figure 24: SRRP Property Stewartstown Road view pre-renovation (Source: SRRP archives)

During this period the British Army had an official policy of non-communication with the IRA and the broader Republican Movement. However, all community members interviewed understood this process to have taken place.
At the height of the Troubles the Stewartstown Road interface was one of the most violent in Belfast, despite its peripheral location, and the Suffolk estate quickly became a stronghold of the Ulster Defense Association (UDA) with its deputy leader, John McMichael, regularly reminding the Suffolk community that the estate was the UDA’s was the Unionism’s “Alamo,” and that the UDA whatever it took to defend what remained of Protestant Suffolk (Jean Brown Interview). This sense of reliance on the UDA within Suffolk – the Orange dot within a sea of Green – allowed by relatively hard-line UDA supporters to dominate the community’s politics, a trend that, though fading, has been maintained due to the continuous nature of periodic violence.

**Redevelopment Efforts, Actors, and Outcomes:**

The legacy of strong UDA Paramilitary representation within the Suffolk community, and IRA representation on the Lenadoon side, had serious repercussions for redevelopment hopes on both sides of the interface as the two hard-line communities had nearly no interaction outside of violent incidents for almost twenty years while Lenadoon increasingly suffered from overcrowding, Suffolk from out-migration, and both from high levels of deprivation.

The buildings that fronted Stewartstown Road, however, did inspire attempts at regeneration and intercommunity collaboration. In 1983 a government employment program called ‘action for community employment’ (ACE) was run out of one of the buildings, intended to address the high levels of unemployment in both the Protestant and Catholic communities. However, violence continued to define the character of the interface. The program was unable to establish any formal communication between the communities, and was even petro-bombed regularly by both the UDA, based on ACE’s open willingness to employ and assist Catholics, as well as by IRA because of the offices critical positioning on the Protestant edge of the interface (J. Brown, interview).
In 1994, with the initial IRA-Unionist ceasefire, the Suffolk Community Forum was established in order to address the Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s (NIHE) imminent demolition of the remaining buildings bordering Stewartstown Road on the Protestant side of the interface. This plan was announced as part of a wider effort to bring the existing housing up to standard and reduce the considerable number of derelict properties in the Suffolk estate (SLIG Archives). As these buildings represented a portion of the peaceline that had defined Suffolk’s territory since the population shift during the 1970s, the community was anxious that their demolition would result in a further “loss of Protestant territory” as the Catholic estate of Lenadoon was already “bursting at its seams” (Brown Interview). The Suffolk Community Forum was notified that they would be given five years to phase out all operations on the site and prepare for demolition. Efforts to find the necessary funding to renovate the properties were consistently turned down as the Suffolk Community Forum were repeatedly informed that the Estate represented too small a community to warrant the amount of funding that the project would require.

“We were told that the only way that we could hope to get funding of any significance was to approach the community in Lenadoon and ask them if they would work with us on a cross community basis...but this represented a huge step for us in Suffolk, living in a UDA dominated community who were violently opposed to any kind of cross-community contact at all. They even said they had a stated policy of not talking to anybody who talked to ‘Fenians’. People were afraid, especially men.” (Jean Brown Interview)

Regardless, with the NIHE refusing to engage Suffolk’s hopes of retaining the property, a small group, wholly comprised of women, made contact with the Lenadoon community and, with the assistance of a hired mediator, established the Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group (SLIG) in 1996, and eventually, after a long period of reduced contact due to an intense and sustained outburst of intercommunity violence in 1997 related to rioting at an Orange march in Portadown, a town to the south-west of Belfast, the Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project Limited (SRRP) was established in 2000.

The SRRP represented the first time in the history of Northern Ireland that two
notably sectarian communities had come together to form a limited property development company. The SRRP plan was to redevelop the existing properties fronting Stewartstown Road, and create a new, mixed-use development with commercial, retail, and non-profit office space. Though it took the Suffolk members of the SRRP over a year to convince the wider Suffolk community to approve the joint Lenadoon-Suffolk redevelopment of the property, namely as it represented the creation of 'shared space' within the Protestant/Suffolk boundaries and in an area which had been violently defended by the UDA for thirty years, the project was approved and funded in 2001.

![Figure 25: SRRP Property Stewartstown Road view 2010](image)

The SRRP committee had learned from the experiences at Northgate, and included critical components to their statute which helped address the concerns of both committees. Namely, that each community held a veto over potential uses within the redeveloped site, as well as the promise that, once active, any trading surpluses collected at the end of each year from the businesses within the site would be divided into three, with one third going to the
Suffolk Community Forum, a third to Lenadoon Community Forum, and a third remaining within the development company.

Today, the SRRP development in considered one of the few successful shared spaces at an interface in Northern Ireland. The redeveloped property is fully occupied and viewed as an asset by both communities, having recently expanded to include a new integrated day care facility.

Analysis of the motivations and outcomes of SRRP’s success in regenerating the site on Stewartstown Road, however, again raise serious questions about what it means to redevelop an interface, as well as what the Government’s ‘shared space for a shared future policy (See: OFMDFM, 2005) might actually look like when implemented in contested areas of the city.

First, from a design perspective, the SRRP property, despite its redevelopment, remains fundamentally a peaceline, albeit an economically profitable one. The site was
developed using a full range of “target hardening features” (Brand, 2009), including pull-down metal shutters which allow for the ground floor of the structure to be fully sealed off as part of the larger peaceline structure that it interrupts. Most notable, however, is the fact that the structure was specifically designed to have two entrances, one on the Suffolk side of the interface, and the other fronting Stewartstown road for the Catholic population in Lenadoon. During business hours the building is accessible through each entrance, while in the evening and night both sides are sealed off; the heavy gating evident around the Suffolk community’s entrance to the building again reminiscent of more traditional peaceline structures (See Figure 27).

While there is no doubting that the SRRP has succeeded in adapting the formerly derelict site and, in doing so with the community itself leading the process on both sides, gone a long way towards building intercommunity trust; it is role as relational space is called into question by the fact that primarily it is utilized by two separate communities, unable to even share an entrance. Similarly, its reliance on commercial usage and community economic returns pose serious questions to its replicability in the vast majority of interface areas in Belfast which will not be able to “shop there way out of conflict.” K. Sterrett, interview)
Second, because the community forums in each community hold veto power of potential uses on the site, understanding their hopes for the future of the area is critical to evaluating the potential for future transformative development around the site. When interviewed, the Suffolk Community Forum members who initially presented the project to both communities made it clear that they viewed the development, first and foremost, as a way to insure the survival of a homogeneous and territorially uncompromised, Protestant Suffolk estate. As one of the project’s founders described, because of the long history of violence and paramilitary dominance in the area, those behind the project stressed that they were “working towards the same goal” as the UDA’s community representation: The long-term stainability of a Unionist, Protestant, Suffolk. (Brown, Interview).

Within the Suffolk Community Forum’s context, the main tool of insuring this is the use of its veto over to insure that the provision of Catholic or mixed housing on the site, which remains vehemently opposed by the Suffolk Community Forum’s leadership despite requests from the Lenadoon community, remains prohibited. Because the persistence of ‘single identity’ housing is a top priority for the Suffolk community, the veto power associated with co-ownership over the development means that a large area of available land directly behind the development of the Suffolk side of the interface will remain undeveloped. This type of control is critical to maintaining the existing territorial boundaries as the Suffolk estate, a community characterized by high vacancy rates with no need for new housing, while the Lenadoon community is overcrowded and would otherwise petition the NIHE to build new housing units in that space.

It is this simultaneous use of the SRRP site to facilitate community interaction, while still maintaining its peaceline function of insuring the territorial boundaries of the two groups are held static that presents a profound challenge to those seeking to promote truly shared, non-sectarian space in Belfast’s traditionally sectarian neighborhoods. Gaffikin, et al (2008) aptly frame this issue in stating that:
"If a shared city means an ‘agreed city’ and the latter embodies agreement to disagree, and thereby a high degree of separate living in a manner that is mutually respectful and non-threatening, that is one thing. But, if it means a significant increase in integrated social interaction and inter-communal collaboration, rooted in values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and independence, that is a much more ambitious project." (Planning Shared Space for a Shared Future: vi)

When considered in this light it should be observed that, to a significant extent, the SRRP development in fact reinforces the division between the Suffolk and Lenadoon communities, building trust through the management company that neither will infringe upon the other. In this sense the simultaneous use of the site as a 1.5 million pound, locally administered, peaceline presents significant challenges to further transformation in the larger area. As Deirdre Mac Bride points out:

“If Lenadoon wanted to remove the peace line and Jean [Brown] was saying no, nobody’s going to do it. The Housing Executive aren’t going to do it, the Politician aren’t going to let it happen, the DOE aren’t going to do it, the DSD aren’t going to do it – that’s the way it is.” (interview)

3.5 The Ratchet Effect and Interface Adaptation

“If we said, in twenty years time we really want to see these communities be able to live without these interfaces and have people feel safe and then counted back from there, we’d be doing stuff that’s a lot more radical. As it stands, nobody is really convinced that can happen.” G. Barbour, NIO (interview)

In all three case studies, legacies of conflict, spatial division, and fragmentation amongst development actors created conditions in which development outcomes served to exacerbate rather than ameliorate cross-community divisions. Though it should be noted that conflicts of various intensity characterize development and planning processes in all contexts (Minnery, 1985), these cases exemplify a unique situation in which planning efforts are specifically aimed at reducing cross-community hostility and providing physical spaces where meaningful ‘relational’ interaction can take place, but in fact produce, to varying extents, the opposite condition all together. Here I argue that it is necessary to
explore the ‘ratcheting effect’ that the initial implementation of significant partitions and the meanings subsequently ascribed onto them has had on present-day development outcomes around interface zones.

Within cognitive sciences, the metaphor of the ratchet effect refers to a situation in which “an individual confronts an artifact or cultural practice that she has inherited from others, along with a novel situation for which the artifact does not seem fully suited,” thus joining the process of further, generational innovation and adaptation of that artifact (Tomasello 1999, 41). The defining feature of the ratchet effect is that any future adaptations to the inherited artifact build upon its existing condition when passed down, moving forward through history. While Tomasello’s original metaphor cannot be directly applied to physical adaptations to the built environment caused by urban civil conflict, it provides a critical lens through which to view the long-term impacts the peacelines in all three of the cases.

The Artifacts

The commonality across all three case studies is the implementation of formalized structures of local level partition by the British Army in the early 1970s. These peacelines, believed at the time of their construction to be temporary measures, were a direct reaction to uncontrollable levels of intercommunity sectarian violence. This is not a unique phenomenon in urban civil conflict. One need look no further than the current news coverage (BBC 2003; The Guardian 2007; The Guardian 2006) of the proliferation of barricades aimed at prohibiting sectarian violence in Baghdad to see similar logic at work nearly forty years later.

It is important to here to emphasize that, at the time of the structures’ initial

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12 The ratchet effect has been employed in numerous other fields of study, most notably economics, where it simply refers to “the tendency of a variable to be influenced by its own largest previous value” (Oxford Dictionary of Economics, internet) To this author’s understanding, within the field of urban planning and development the term has had an extremely limited use; the only previous use relevant to this work was in describing increasing trends in residential segregation (Smith 1991)
construction there was no concept of ‘peacelines,’ or even ‘interface’ zones in Belfast. Though high levels of segregation had always existed, up until that point there had been no common vocabulary to describe the nature of the points of proximity between Nationalist and Unionist communities. In working around the interfaces of North Belfast, the Northgate project in particular, Deirdre Mac Bride (interview) witnessed the emergence of the term ‘interface,’ recounting that:

"People were still compartmentalizing their areas so that they would conceptualize them as a fixed space and not actually see the interface as having any bearing on that... and I think psychologically people were only just starting to come to terms with them [interfaces]... the significant thing that we did was that we actually named the manner of the beast."

It was through this process that the territorial, political, and social significance of the ‘interface,’ as outlined in section 2.3, first emerged within the narrative of conflict in Belfast, and throughout Northern Ireland.

The Inheritance

Despite the intended temporary nature of the peacelines, they have proved an enduring feature of Belfast’s landscape. During the Troubles, even after the worst years of violence had passed, the walls served critical functions in providing safety, as well as territorial integrity during a time of rapidly shifting demographics that neither the security forces, nor the planning agencies could sufficiently guarantee. Though the vast majority of literature on the peacelines points to there role in the reproduction of fear and ‘othering’ between the two communities, it is worth noting Boal and Livingstone’s (1984) nuanced assertion that the fortification of ethnic enclaves also provided what little freedom of movement and peace of mind that Belfast residents could experience during this period, albeit only within one’s own defined territory. The impact of this notion is evident in the case of the Madrid Street interface where, though the community was initially concerned that the peaceline remain a gate, which could be opened at times, once installed the
community members quickly grew to support a permanent and impenetrable structure due to the peace of mind it provided.

**Adaptation without Transformation**

All three case studies inform us as to how the government agencies and community organizations that ‘inherited’ the management and development of these peacelines since their initial construction amid high intensity violent conflict have struggled to adapt and alter the interfaces within the new context of a national level peace process, as well as the present policy concern with “planning shared space for a shared future.” (Gaffikin, Sterrett, et al. 2008) Though the case studies only represent three specific peaceline interfaces out of the existing 27, the fact that not a single peaceline has been removed in pre or post-peace treaty Belfast alike strongly implies that this struggle is the norm rather than the exception in Belfast.

Moreover, what alterations have been accomplished at the interface do not represent transformations so much as adaptations, a critical difference within the context of contested space. Speaking to this point, in their assessment of the nature of contested space in Belfast, Gaffikin and McEldowney, et al., (2008) call attention to the dichotomy between ‘display space’ and ‘relational space,’ the former “used as theatre to affirm what tend to be fixed identities” while the latter is able to accommodate “multiple identities that interact and change, based on negotiation over time.” Though the SRRP project represents the most significant adaptation of the interface to suite the post-1998 conditions in Belfast, its simultaneous use as a partition, as well as the intentional use of its institutional functioning to insure that the spaces on each side remain segregated, imply that it has not fully succeeded in transforming the “display space” of the interface and original partition into the type of ‘relational space’ that the peace process has called for. New walling and a lack of strategic vision at the Madrid Street interface, and a failure to produce a locally embedded and productive buffer space between the Tigers Bay and New Lodge
communities have all equally opposed the transformation of their interfaces.

In all three instances the legacy of chronic violence, as evident common perception that repeated outbreaks of violence around the interface are inevitable, especially during the summer months, has led to physical adaptations at the interfaces which further entrench the divide between the Nationalist and Unionist communities. This process is supported by government agencies such as the NIO, NIHE, and the local police as they individually pursue expedient and uncoordinated efforts to manage intercommunity violence and physical development. In this sense, just as in Tomasello's metaphor, local level physical partition within Belfast's context of chronic violence has been ratcheted; continually adapted to the changing nature of the Nationalist/Unionist dispute but never transforming or receding beyond the state in which it was inherited.

3.6: Chapter Summary:

This chapter has attempted to call attention to the complexities associated with the local level management of interface areas between Catholic/Nationalist and Protestant/Unionist communities throughout Belfast. As eleven additional peacelines have been created in the city since 1998, and none have been removed despite a shifting nature of violence and planning policy in the early stages of prioritizing the development 'shared space,' the case studies put forward in this chapter illustrate how, within a context of chronic violence, the physical and social infrastructures which accompany interface areas have created an increasingly difficult environment in which to transform these spaces. Understanding the ratcheting effect that the initial implementation of the peacelines, as well as the value and meaning that was subsequently ascribed onto these infrastructures, have significant impacts on attempts to redevelop the interfaces is critical in order to understand why adaptations during the past decade of have in fact further entrenched sectarian divisions, and prohibited holistic redevelopment attempts.
Chapter 4: Redeveloping Division

“Where the government’s Shared Future policy is flawed is that it was designed by academics and well meaning middle class liberals. It’s a top-down process, it’s not-bottom up...they are trying to break up communities and we are not ready for that.” (B. Watson, Lower Shankill Community Association, interview)

4.1 Chapter overview

The previous chapter highlighted the impacts that Belfast’s legacy of endemic conflict have had on the built environment at the neighborhood scale; illustrating not only the challenges presented by the fragmentation and lack of coordination which characterizes the city’s bureaucratic and community organizations, but also the extent to which attempts at regeneration in interface areas have been conditioned by the history of violent conflict, producing outcomes which further entrench, socially and physically, the city’s sectarian divide despite national-level policy supporting the creation of ‘shared space.’

In this chapter these outcomes are situated within the diverging visions that have emerged during the past decade’s period of peace and economic growth as to what a shared and peaceful future ought to look like when translated into spatial form. In section 4.2 the objectives and visions of national-level policy surrounding redevelopment and spatial integration, initially touched on in section 1.5, are further elaborated. Section 4.3 outlines how the outcomes associated with the three case studies inform, and are reinforced by, the community level vision of a peaceful future in Belfast relying on the city remaining ethnically divided.

Finally, section 4.4 argues that, within Belfast’s highly ‘contested’ spatial and fragmented bureaucratic context, these divergent conceptualizations between various government policy makers and local communities have influenced the nature of conflict in the city, underpinning the perpetuation of the threat of sectarian rioting around interface zones which has characterized Belfast since the 1800s as well as the culture of territorial defense against integration.
4.2 National Level Policy of Integration and Transformation

As outlined in section 1.5, the present-day policy document dominating the planning and urban development agendas amongst government agencies in the city is the "A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland." (see OFMDFM 2005) This seminal work, and subsequent elaborations such as the "Program for Government 2008 - 2011" (Northern Ireland Executive 2008) and the "Cohesion, Sharing and Integration" agenda (Northern Ireland Assembly 2009) have prioritized a new approach to cross-community spatial relationships aimed explicitly at encouraging "sharing over separation" with regard to physical integration and redevelopment (OFMDFM 2005). The policy is rooted in both economic and social assumptions about the high cost of Belfast’s legacy of spatial division, as presented in section 2.3, and its relationship to violent conflict. Perhaps the most powerful assertion of these ideals came with the Northern Ireland Executive’s (2008, 12-13) statement that future policy must:

"address the divisions within our society and achieve measurable reductions in sectarianism, racism and hate crime. If we do not take this opportunity now there is a very real risk that the divisions of our past will be replicated."

The economic logic of ethnicity-neutral and anti-sectarian post-conflict reconstruction is also clearly apparent in the national-level push to rebrand and reimage Belfast as a normalized post-conflict capital in order to stimulate international economic investment in the city (Northern Ireland Executive 2008, 11).

Though the past decade's national-level efforts to promote a new form of post-conflict urban living are not unique to Belfast, representing a more common trend amongst cities “wounded” by large-scale violence of reaching out to globalized processes to facilitate reinvestment and help cover over the scars left by the conflict (Schneider and Susser 2003, 18), the policy objectives have been clearly conditioned by the nature of sectarian conflict in Belfast. Intent on creating ‘relational spaces’ throughout the city where no sectarian identity is prioritized over another, the physical manifestation of these policies is evident
in the neutral architecture of the redeveloped city center, intentionally creating spaces that avoid any question of “whose culture” and utilize imagery and design features unaligned with either the Protestant Unionist or Catholic Republican cultural markers which characterize Belfast’s traditional neighborhoods. (see Figure 28)

This sentiment, however, is not shared by all involved with the national level peace process, with objections being advanced by political parties such as the Ulster Unionist Party, pointing out that, for their constituents, strict ethnic pluralism and a “two main communities approach” to building respectful but separate cultures remains a paramount
objective (UUP 2003, 4). These internal disagreements only exacerbates the existing bureaucratic fragmentation and expedient decision making that has impeded the development of shared space in Belfast’s sectarian neighborhoods.

While full consensus does not exist at the national level, the spatial bias of Belfast’s post-conflict redevelopment towards undeveloped or underutilized industrial sites, around the Lagan River especially, has allowed for signature projects to be accomplished efficiently even within the fragmented bureaucratic and political framework precisely because they take place on land without strong ties to the wider sectarian conflict (Murtagh, 2008). In addition, the advancement of the vision of shared space as imagined through the peace and reconciliation process has been largely turned over to private development interests, significantly eliminating the severe bureaucratic inefficiencies and uncoordinated decision making which, as outlined in section 2.3, resulted from institutional restructuring during the Troubles and had immediate impacts on the outcomes in the previous case studies.

4.3 Local Level Aspirations: Peaceful but Separate

As exemplified by the case studies, the national-level vision and policy of urban cohesion and integration has not translated into physical form in development outcomes at Belfast’s neighborhood interfaces. Rather, redevelopment attempts at the interface across all three case studies resulted in a further entrenching of the sectarian divide in the area; be it due to a fortification of existing patterns of partition in the Short Strand, the community-led redevelopment of the SRRP aimed at insuring the maintenance of static ethnic boundaries in Suffolk, or the fear of further territorial loss following the implementation of a disembedded ‘buffer space’ between the Tigers Bay and New Lodge Communities. These outcomes, though undoubtably the products of their own individual contexts and local conditions, shed light on the divergent local-level vision of Belfast’s ‘shared future.’

In each instance the understanding that long-term viability of peaceful Protestant/Catholic relations in Belfast was contingent on securing the interfaces as static territorial
markers, rather transforming them into integrated, relational spaces. In Suffolk, Jean Brown, a founder of the SRRP (interview) summed up this point while defending the Suffolk Community Forum’s position that the SRRP site would never be utilized for mixed identity (Catholic and Protestant) housing, stating that, “the core strength of the SRRP project is that we aren’t going to apologize for who we were, on either side. A shared future has to accommodate that...it can’t be about creating this wishy-washy mess where everybody is meant to live together happily.”

This vision again was evident in the Short Strand where, despite initial progress towards maintaining the final spatial link between the Nationalist and Unionist Community, fear of future violence caused residents to support the permanent partition of Madrid Street rather than pursue a cross-community initiative, which itself was contingent upon single identity housing. The common perception that ‘shared space’ in reality represents a territorial concession by one of the two groups, as seen in the case of the Northgate development, only highlights the relationship between on-the-ground failures to implement coordinated redevelopment projects in the face of the ratcheted levels of sectarian conflict around interface zones and the community-level rejection of shared space for a shared future models championed by the government.

### 4.4 Divergence and the Condition of Conflict

The competing visions of what post-conflict urban living means in Belfast presented the previous sections, each dictating development outcomes in spatially distinct sections of the city, are the direct product of Belfast’s history of conflict and violence. Though at differing scales, both the “cohesion, sharing and integration” policy agenda set by Belfast’s post-conflict National government as well as the neighborhood level commitment to territorial and cultural segregation are both physically manifest in Belfast’s built environment and continue to reproduce the spatial logic of conflict that first emerged during the 1800s, finding its full articulation during the 1969-1998 period of the Troubles.
and dictates that interface areas act as the specific battlegrounds on which the national level conflict plays out.

As exemplified in the case study sites, three interface areas which accounted for the high rates of the violence during the troubles, Belfast’s traditionally high conflict sectarian neighborhoods are now characterized by only sporadic outbursts of sectarian rioting and violence, while the fear of severe property damage as well as a resurgence of full scale violent conflict continues to inform decisions making and the perpetuation of walling as a response to ethnic tensions. While the decreasing trends of urban, security related violence (See Figure 28) stand as a testament to the considerable disarmament and withdrawal of the paramilitaries since 1998, the continuing role that violence, by way of the repetitive, chronic nature of disturbances in the city, plays in shaping the built environment must be considered a worrying sign.

This continued reliance on physical segregation and separation as a means of insuring peace at the local level illustrates how the context of chronic violence continues to condition the structuring and restructuring of physical space at the neighborhood scale. It is the tendency of those outcomes to reinforce the conflation of urban territory with the larger sectarian struggle, as observed in each of the case studies that has continued to recondition violence in the city during the decade of peace, emphasizing the role that conflict plays in insuring the maintenance of territorial divides and homogeneous living patterns.

Finally, while territorial conflict in Belfast has traditionally been related solely to the defense of Protestant territory against Catholic expansion, or vise versa, the emerging vision of post-conflict urban living which is enveloping the city center, has added a new layer of territorial conflict, resembling the more traditional tensions surrounding urban planning and development throughout the world. That said, the unique level of importance placed on territory in Belfast, stretching back to the initial establishment of ‘heartland
neighborhoods' as cultural, ethnic, and national homelands in the 19th century, highlighted in section 2.2 of this work, further exacerbates this situation in the city. Of particular relevance is the lack of recognition within the national-level vision of urban cohesion and integration of the weight placed on demographics and internally cohesive cultural representation amidst the country’s fundamentally undecided as set out by the Good Friday Agreement (see section 1.5). Here the increasingly entrenched logic of territorial defense that the case studies underlined have far wider reaching implications as, particularly
within declining Protestant neighborhoods, the fortification of boundaries is viewed as the only mechanism through which to encourage the return of those residents who relocated out of the city during the Troubles in the face of rapidly changing demographic patterns in the city. (see figures 30, 31)
Ultimately, looking back to the conditions of decline, unemployment and outmigration, especially amongst Protestant communities, outlined in the post World War II years leading up to the emergence of the troubles, it is clear that sectarian conflict in Belfast has been influenced by destabilization of economic, demographic, and physical conditions related to patterns of urban development and decline in the past. As the legacy of violent conflict continues to drive divergent urban trajectories in the city, and uncoordinated and fragmented action undermine efforts to address the state of deterioration around interface zones in the city, it is clear that the post-conflict urban conditions in Belfast are, in turn, reconditioning the present day patterns of conflict organized around the maintenance of territory as well as cultural homogeneity. While not accounting specifically for sectarian disturbances, Figure 32 demonstrates how crime and disorder with Belfast remain spatially correlated with the interface areas throughout the city and that while the national peace and reconciliation process has succeeded in removing the vast majority of the high level urban warfare which characterized the Troubles, there remains a strong link between the entrenching of the sectarian divide apparent in the previous case studies, and areas of heightened disorder.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the ways in which the legacy of conflict in Belfast has conditioned divergent visions of a shared and peaceful future in the city, with ratcheted levels of segregation and contestation at the interface, as well as the realities of continued, albeit reduced, violence in Belfast's sectarian neighborhoods driving a common local-level belief that continued segregation and cultural homogeneity represent Belfast's urban future; while a national level development agenda forges ahead with its mission of erasing the uniquely spatial scares of Belfast's history of sectarian conflict through policies of ethnicity neutral development and the promotion of spaces meant to facilitate cohesion and integration. Finally, the impact of these development trajectories on the increasingly
Belfast 2001
Crime and Disorder Score

Figure 32: Crime and Disorder Mapping, 2001. Note that there is a clear spatial relationship between the interface areas and higher rates of crime and disorder. While this mapping is not specifically concerned with sectarian incidents, and these areas are also characterized by high rates of deprivation. (Source: Gaffikin et al 2008, 191. Reprinted with permission of Belfast Community Relations Council.)
low level but spatially distinct patterns of conflict and violence in the city, which themselves remain as drivers of development decisions, was explored.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis seeks to elucidate the processes through which the context of chronic violence has conditioned Belfast’s built environment at multiple scales, while in turn, being itself conditioned by those outcomes. Taking into consideration the intertwined and mutually reinforcing nature of these phenomena in Belfast, the aims of this work is to prioritize a framework for understanding conflict and violence in the city which emphasizes the potential of violence, especially when chronic and protracted, to comprise “both a result of, and catalyst for transformations in urban governance and spatial organization,” as laid out by Jutersonke, Muggah, and Rodgers (2009). Within this study, a longitudinal approach was prioritized in order to demonstrate that these processes of cause and effect are not temporally confined, but rather take place over long periods of time, conditioning, interacting with, and reconditioning one another.

In examining present day trends in urban development and management at the interface of Protestant/Unionist and Catholic/Nationalist communities, the central findings from the cases studied illustrate how the legacy of violent conflict has significantly impacted the built environment in Belfast, ratcheting levels of segregation and division around these spaces, and subsequently informed present-day visions of for what post-conflict urban living means in the city.

Though the three cases represent varying efforts, actors and outcomes, each displayed the continued relevance of Troubles era institutional adaptations to high intensity violence and civil conflict in the current decisions being made about the adaptation and management of physical space around the interfaces, they also commonly illustrated the extent to which micro level partitions in Belfast, contrary to their original intent, have proven anything but temporary infrastructures. It is as the process of continued
and increased walling and segregation takes place in Belfast’s neighborhoods, that the critical national and local level divergence in conceptualization of ‘shared space’ and ‘good relations’ continues to grow.

With regard to urban violence, there is no doubting the spatial correlation between interface areas and urban civil conflict, evident not only in the mapping of Troubles era deaths (figure 12), but also in present-day levels of crime and disorder (figure 32). This thesis has argued that the perpetuation of this correlation is not simply base on past legacies, but also on a response from local communities to the pressure of redevelopment aimed at breaking down barriers and reducing levels of segregation and cultural homogeneity in the face of unstable and rapidly shifting sectarian demographics and a fundamentally unresolved question of future sovereignty. This pressure, however, is not articulated through coordinated actors and institutions, meaning that even when projects are implemented their outcomes tend to be more directly influenced by the legacy of violence and present-day conflict than by any overarching strategy.

Ultimately, while the urban realm has always been the forum for conflict, both creative and destructive (Harvey 2003, 939) the conditions on the ground in Belfast represent a situation in which chronic conflict has formed the context in which the urban realm has been developed; where physical territory, politics, culture, identity, and conflict are inseparable, all together quite literally written on the wall. Looking beyond the context of Northern Ireland, these trends of endemic violence and ratcheted levels of division and urban civil conflict ought to inform, at least in their observable patterns, other cities which are currently or will soon begin the process of simultaneous post-conflict reconstruction and forward looking development. Indeed, ‘wounded’ cities around the world will likely experience similar divergences in post-conflict urban trajectories and future research must to focus on understanding how the relationships between various physical and institutional adaptations to violent conflict impact outcomes at various scales in disparate ways, and underpinning the perpetuation, or mitigation of conflict.
Policy and Planning in Belfast: Moving Forward

While this thesis did not set out to directly recommend action on the part of policy makers and planners in Belfast, in light of the proposed transition to a more comprehensive form of spatial planning, there is no doubt that conscious efforts to understand and react to the types of fragmentation, at multiple scales as highlighted in this work, as well as the numerous others cited, will be necessary if progress is to be made in tackling the many complex challenges that interface zones have created in the city. This not meant to imply that one vision of a shared Belfast need be prioritized over another, but that these visions must be recognized and confronted directly with the aim of mitigating the associated deprivation, insecurity, and stagnation that interfaces engender and beginning to allow for locally supported dispersion of the dividends of peace into the neighborhoods suffering the most. Central here will be openly acknowledging that interface disorder is not simply an issue of poverty, legacy, and youth anti-social behavior, but rather part of a continuing and legitimate narrative of territorial defense. While there is no doubt that the limits of planning to address these issues have been illustrated in this work, it is also clear that a turn to more comprehensive and coordinated spatial approach to planning will create more conducive framework for addressing what is clearly a comprehensive and far reaching legacy of violence.
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Keating, A. (2009) Interview with Jon Howcroft: Tigers Bay, Community Development Worker; current chair of Community Relations Sub-group in Tigers Bay, Ex-UDA paramilitary Member

Keating, A. (2009) Interview with Tom Ekin: Alliance Party of Northern Ireland - Belfast City Councilor (1997-Present); Member: Belfast City Council Development Committee; Chair: Belfast City Council’s Good Relations Working Group (2002-Present); Lord Mayor of Belfast (2004-2005); Current Business owner in South Belfast

Keating, A. (2009) Interview with Jonathan Hodge: Community Worker, South Belfast Partnership Board


APPENDIX A:

N.I. Political Organization Flowchart

Head of State/Queen

Head of Government/Prime Minister

Westminster Parliament of the United Kingdom (House of Commons & House of Lords)*

Devolved Government of Northern Ireland (Current form since 2007)

Northern Ireland Assembly

Executive Committees

The Departments (Departmental Committees)

Northern Ireland Office

Administering Body of 'Direct Rule' (1973-2007)**

Responsible for all Government functions NOT devolved by the Good Friday Agreement:
- policing, security policy, prisons, crime, justice,
- international relations, taxation, national insurance,
- regulation of financial services, telecommunications and broadcasting

Responsible for all Government departments devolved by the Good Friday Agreement:
- Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister; Agriculture and Rural Development; Culture; Arts & Leisure; Education; Employment & Learning; Enterprise, Trade & Investment; Environment; Finance & Personnel; Health; Social Services & Public Safety; Regional Development; Social Development.

* Includes 18 MPs from Northern Ireland
** Contained a five month period of Devolution in 1974, and a two year period from 1999 - 2002
APPENDIX B:

Glossary of Related Terms:


Loyalist
This term generally refers to the more extreme expression of unionism, with closer ties to paramilitary groups – though this is not a necessary trait.

Nationalist
This is a broad term that refers to those who favor a united Ireland.

Republican
This term generally refers to a more militant section of Nationalists, particularly those who advocate military methods of struggle. The term Republican is also, however, often used to describe both the IRA and Sinn Fein movements.

Unionist
This term refers to a general population that supports the continued political link between Britain and Northern Ireland. However, its use is often more narrow, describing a right-wing political movement that has been organized around the principle.

Alliance Party
The Alliance Party was launched in 1970 by a group of liberal unionists. This group was previously known as the New Ulster Movement. Its traditional base is largely middle class and tends to be located in the less troubled areas in the east of the providence.
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
Long time party of the Reverend Ian Paisly, the DUP has traditionally been considered to be among the more hard-line and sectarian of the Unionist political parties.

Irish Republican Army (IRA)
The term IRA emerged first in the 1919 Irish war of independence against Britain. The group has undergone multiple schisms and transformations since the partition of Ireland in 1921-22. The 'IRA' most commonly referred to in this work re-emerged as a key player in Northern Irish politics and conflict in the late 1960s. In 1969 the group split again into the 'Official IRA' and the 'Provisional IRA.' The Provisional IRA is the group most commonly associated with the term, with Gerry Adams and others leading their campaign up until the ceasefire and peace treaty era. More recently, a further schism seems to have emerged with the violent actions of the 'Real IRA,' a splinter group unwilling to accept the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, especially with the possible concessions over policing.

Nationalist Party
The Nationalist Party, originally associated with the United Irish League. The party previously contended with Sinn Fein for Nationalist Catholic support, but was largely replaced by the SDPL during the Civil Rights struggle of the 1960s-70s

Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)
The SDLP was formed by a group of opposition MPs in the Stormont Parliament in 1970. Despite the inclusion of Labour in the title, the SDLP has traditionally been associated more as a more moderate, nationalist sectarian party, rather than a cross community labour party.
Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)

Established in 1920 by the British Government at the request of the Unionist interests in Northern Ireland, the Ulster Special Constabulary was largely replaced by the RUC in 1922. Composed overwhelmingly of Protestants, the RUC has been considered a repressive wing of the Unionist state and is notorious for its attacks against Catholic Civil Rights protestors as well as other Catholic citizens throughout the 1960s-70s. Though renamed in 2001 as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) its alleged collusion with the loyalist paramilitaries and its repressive role during the Troubles have resulted in the force being considered unacceptable in many Catholic areas even today.

Sinn Fein

Sinn Fein has its origins as a political party in 1905, and later gained popularity in 1918. The long time party of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's current day strength was born out of its adoption as the political wing of the Provisional IRA, as well as its association with the local election IRA prisoners such as Bobby Sands during the hunger strikes of 1981. It is currently the majority party of Catholic Nationalism and the second largest party in the Northern Irish Assembly.

Ulster Defense Association (UDA)

The UDA emerged in 1971 as an umbrella association of unofficial protestant vigilante groups and became the largest of the Protestant paramilitaries. The group has carried out countless assaults and murders, usually under the title Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF). The UDA is now classified as a terrorist group in the United Kingdom. The UDA was party to the 1994 ceasefire, but continued sporadic attacks until 2007. The group's symbol featuring a red hand is still common throughout Protestant neighborhoods in Belfast.
Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)

The UVF has its origins in the 1912 resistance to Home Rule by Protestant Unionists, with the support of the British establishment. The group re-emerged as a key player during the Troubles and was associated with some of the more brutal violence of the period.

Unionist Party

The Unionist Party was established in 1904 by Protestant industrialists, merchants, and landowners and backed by the British ruling class. The party has had close ties to the British Conservative Party. The Unionist Party was the sole party of Government in Northern Ireland from partition in 1921-22 until local parliament was dissolved in 1972. Now known as the Ulster Unionist Party or the Official Unionist Party and remains one of the two main unionist political parties in Northern Ireland, though it has support to the more hard-line DUP in recent years.