

**Université de Lorraine, ERUDI, Master Mondes Anglophones  
UE 903 – Civilisation**

**Devoir à rendre avant le 6 janvier 2023**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Subject:**

In May 2013, the Northern Ireland government published the new, good relations strategy, “Together: Building a United Community”, in which they established (among other objectives) **“a 10-year programme to reduce and eventually remove all interface barriers, working together with the local community”**. What are these “interface barriers” and why were they erected? As we are reaching the 2023 deadline, to what extent has this programme been implemented?

## CONTENTS :

### CONTENTS

### ABBREVIATIONS & PRELIMINARY NOTE

<b>ESSAY</b>	<b>p. 1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>p. 1</b>
<b>Part 1: Historical and political contexts in NI (1921-2022)</b>	<b>p. 3</b>
1.1 From the creation of Northern Ireland to the Troubles	p. 3
1.2 From the Troubles to the Good Friday Agreement (GFA)	p. 4
1.3 From the GFA to Brexit: a difficult peace	p. 6
<b>Part 2: Peace walls in NI: from segregation to dark tourism</b>	<b>p. 12</b>
2.1 Segregation and peace walls in Northern Ireland	p. 12
2.2 Murals on peace walls and dark tourism	p. 19
2.3 “Hidden barriers” and other obstacles to removing interface barriers	p. 22
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>p. 26</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>p. 28</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
Appendix 1: Illustrations	p. 31
Appendix 2: Notes from Ms. X’s interview	p. 41
Appendix 3: Testimonies	p. 47

**ABBREVIATIONS**

DoJ	NI Department of Justice
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GFA	Good Friday Agreement, or Belfast Agreement
IFI	International Fund for Ireland
IRA	The Irish Republican Army
NI	Northern Ireland
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP	Social Democratic Labour Party
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

**PRELIMINARY NOTE:**

*In the footnotes of the following text, I have simplified the way of writing the references whose complete details can be found in the bibliography section, pp. 28-30. When only a few figures/words have been extracted from an internet website/webpage, the internet link is directly referred to in the footnote.*

## INTRODUCTION

As a teenager growing up in France in the late 70s-early 80s, I vaguely heard about violent fights in Northern Ireland (NI) on television, but the idea of a “war” between Catholics and Protestants in Europe seemed to me more linked to history books (like the Saint-Barthelemy massacre in 1572) than relating to actual, bloody facts happening in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. From U2’s song *Bloody Sunday* in the early 1980s to the eponym film of 2002, bits of information about NI tragic events on the news, such as terrorist attacks and bombs exploding in London and elsewhere, punctuated years of ignorance until I started studying English at University and digging into history and culture of the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland. However, I was still shocked, when I watched a documentary about Belfast peace walls some months ago, to learn that such barriers still existed after more than 20 years of a relative peace in NI. Our literature class this year dealing with “the echoes of the Troubles”, I seized this opportunity to do some thorough research on NI’s specific history and civilisation, focusing first on the Troubles and the following peace process, then on the “famous” peace walls and their murals.

The more I dug into this fascinating subject, the more complex did the situation in NI appear to me. Beyond the Catholic-nationalist-republican and Protestant-unionist-loyalist dichotomy, other divisions in Northern Ireland rest upon social classes. I found an extensive literature about the 30-year conflict, the Good Friday Agreement (GFA, or Belfast Agreement) which put an end to it, and since Brexit, on Northern Ireland’s delicate political and economic situation vis-à-vis the UK, Ireland, and the European Union (EU). The “backstop” and “NI Protocol” issues have been at the centre of the attention of politicians and international newspapers for the last two years and revived the tensions between and within NI communities.

As the centenary of the creation of Northern Ireland was celebrated last year, I decided to explore in the first part of this essay the historical and political contexts explaining Northern Ireland’s unique situation in today’s Europe, and why, after almost 25 years of a relative peace, this area is still so volatile. According to the last census in 2021, 1.9 million people live in NI and the ratios of the two biggest communities are almost even for the first time (45.7% Catholic and 43.5% Protestant). Why are sectarian issues so deeply rooted in NI’s society—more peace walls exist today, i.e., 25 years after the signature of the GFA in 1998, than during the Troubles—despite many government

policies and huge international funds allocated to peace building, for instance through community programmes?

Northern Ireland is still the poorest part of the UK, and the unemployment rate—especially within young people—is the highest in the kingdom<sup>1</sup>. According to Ms. X’s testimony (Appendix 2, p. 46), 30% of people are employed in local government or civil service. With the decline of industry (as in other Western countries), NI has developed tourism as an economic activity for the last decade, with a museum celebrating the Titanic and the glorious past of Belfast shipyards, and with “dark tourism” flourishing on the legacy of the Troubles, such as the murals on peace walls and memorials in cities like Belfast and Derry/Londonderry.

Drawing from this paradox—how peace walls, conspicuous symbols of sectarianism and conflict, have become works of art visited by international tourists—I analysed academic papers and newspaper articles about Belfast’s peace walls in the second part of this essay, with the aim to answer the following questions: why, when and where were these interface barriers erected, and why did the NI government decide in 2013 to remove them within ten years? As the deadline will be reached in a few weeks, why so few walls have been knocked down? Do other barriers than these obvious ones exist in NI urban landscapes, and what are their impact on NI society?

It was not possible for me to go to Northern Ireland and directly experience its culture, record my personal response to the actual murals and peace walls, or interview locals and collect testimonies, so I took the opportunity to interview Ms. X—a NI citizen who was staying in Nancy during Autumn 2022. We met for an hour and a half and she answered the many questions I had prepared (see my notes in Appendix 2). Her views and comments allowed me to back several pieces of information from my academic research, and I am deeply grateful to her. I also feel quite indebted to David Coyles’s work on Belfast’s hidden barriers, as well as Laura McAtackney’s and Stephanie Keppler and Antoinette McKane’s papers on peace walls, which have enlightened me and been foundational in the second part of my essay.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Financial Times*, ‘Northern Ireland tries to heal a legacy of separation’  
<https://www.ft.com/video/5dd3a8c6-17d8-4668-b2b9-471161064fea>

## Part 1: Historical and political contexts in Northern Ireland (1921-2022)

### 1.1 From the creation of Northern Ireland to The Troubles

Beginning as early as the 16th century and the colonisation of Ireland by the English Crown—intensified with the Plantation of Ulster<sup>2</sup> by English and Scottish Protestants from 1609, under James I—two groups emerged in Ireland with differing political and religious outlooks. Catholics predominantly considered themselves Irish and hold nationalist views: they wanted an independent Ireland free from British control. Protestants identified largely as British and unionist, meaning they wished to remain linked to the United Kingdom (UK). Northern Ireland (NI) came into being in 1921, out of irreconcilable differences between Irish nationalists and Ulster unionists as to the future of Ireland within the UK. The former demanded independence while the latter favoured the status quo. The partition of the island was negotiated in 1920 and two new territorial entities were created: the Irish Free State—which was to become the Republic of Ireland in 1949—and the “statelet”<sup>3</sup> of Northern Ireland, consisting of six of the nine counties of the province of Ulster and mainly unionist, became the fourth part of the UK. Before the partition of Ireland in 1921, Ulster was the most industrialised Irish province. Its then renowned industries included shipbuilding<sup>4</sup> and textile, in particular linen, and although their decline was exacerbated by the political and social turmoil of the Troubles, NI’s former industrial heritage is still visible today, with linen mills and shipyards in Belfast being included in urban regeneration projects<sup>5</sup>.

From the onset, the “orange and green” dichotomy has been one of the main characteristics of NI, and refers to the coexistence of these two, often antagonistic, cultures. The “orange” tradition is mostly Protestant in religion, British in identity, and includes unionists and loyalists. Conversely, the “green” tradition is mostly Catholic and Irish and supports a united Ireland. It includes nationalists and republicans. While the rural areas of NI have long been segregated according to religion, in big cities, the two

---

<sup>2</sup> Raymond Gillespie, ‘After the Flight: The Plantation of Ulster’.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/letters/northern-ireland-is-a-statelet-not-a-country-34667610.html> and *L’IRA et le conflit nord-irlandais*, p. 57

<sup>4</sup> The Titanic, for instance, was built in Belfast: <https://www.titanicbelfast.com/history-of-titanic/>

<sup>5</sup> *Faces and Places, Northern Ireland*, p. 162, and <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/citycentre>

communities dwell in close proximity. Though a few mixed districts were built after World War II, barriers were built during the Troubles in order to prevent easy movement between the two communities and reduce violence through segregation.

As from 1921 the majority rule in governmental as well as local elections replaced proportional representation, the demographic unionist majority in NI (2/3 Protestants, 1/3 Catholics) led to a political and economic domination for fifty years. The unionists were determined to defend their territory against the Free State and the Irish Republican army (IRA), thus the province soon equipped itself with impressive security forces: not only was the police (the Royal Ulster Constabulary, RUC) armed, but the government also set up an auxiliary force, the B-Specials, exclusively protestant and soon hated by the Catholic minority. Moreover, the Special Powers Act of 1922, which became permanent in 1933, allowed the NI government to introduce the death penalty or the internment without a trial, to forbid some organisations or impose curfews without reporting to the British Parliament<sup>6</sup>.

## 1.2 From the Troubles to the Good Friday Agreement (GFA)

In the mid-1960s, civil rights campaigners started protesting against anti-Catholic discrimination and in favour of equal rights. They mostly campaigned for the right to vote—with the slogan “one man, one vote” to eliminate plural voting and gerrymandering—and against discrimination in housing and the shortage of social housing. Inspired by the events of Bloody Sunday (when the British Army opened fire on unarmed protesters in the Bogside area of Derry, on 30 January 1972), Brian Friel’s play, *The Freedom of the City* (1973), also denounces the social and economic discriminations faced by the Catholic minority<sup>7</sup>.

The resulting upsurge in sectarianism further deteriorated the relations between the two communities and the so-called “Troubles” started from the late 1960s. Such an understatement should not hide the reality of an armed conflict that was to last thirty years, cost more than 3,500 lives, caused tens of thousands of injuries, and placed an

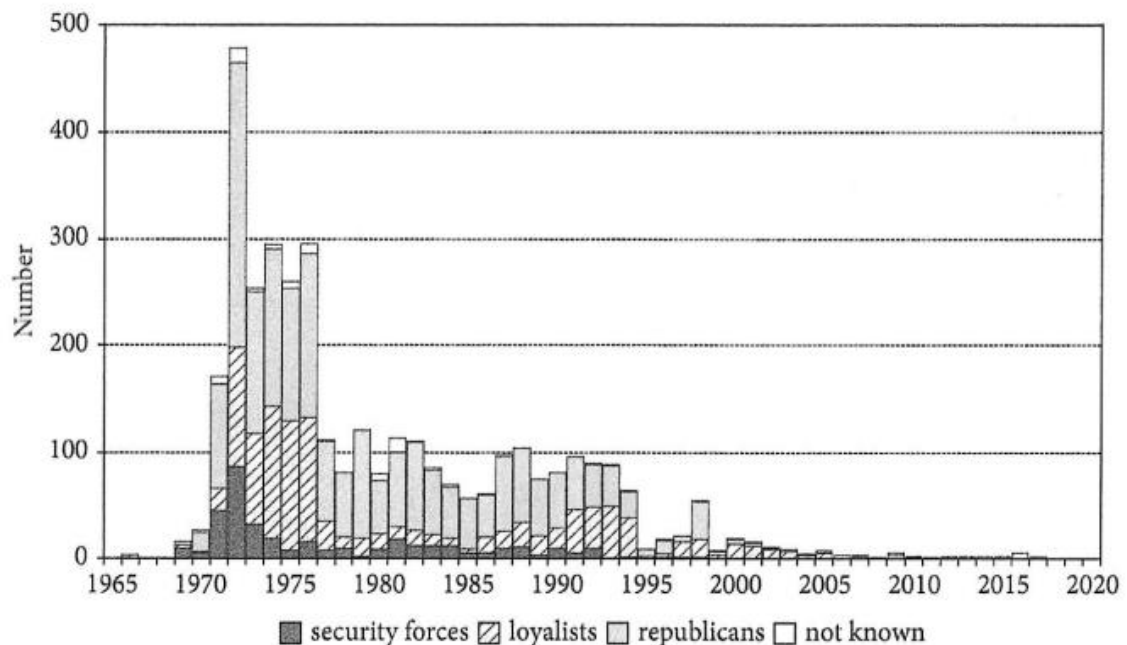
---

<sup>6</sup> *L'IRA et le conflit nord-irlandais*, pp. 57-60

<sup>7</sup> 903-literature class, ‘Ireland and “The Troubles”’: the Literary Echo’

exceptional and costly burden on the British and Irish states<sup>8</sup>. The daily fear and violence endured by NI people during the Troubles are realistically depicted in Bernard Mac Laverty's short novel *Cal* (1982)<sup>9</sup>. The passing of 'emergency provisions' legislation in 1969 as part of a wider counterinsurgency strategy allowed the British Army and the RUC to bypass normal statutory processes when threat to public safety was deemed especially urgent. In August 1971, the Stormont government introduced internment, or detention without a trial, as a means to restore order in nationalist areas. The controversial decision backlashed, increasing the level of unrest and support to the IRA, and led to the suspension of the devolved institutions and the introduction of direct rule from London in March 1972. Internment lasted until the end of 1975, despite regular rallies against the practice and the Irish Government taking legal action to the European Court of Human Rights. Just under two thousand people were interned over the period, 95% of them from a nationalist background. The Long Kesh camp near Belfast, later known as the Maze prison, was one of the main internment sites.<sup>10</sup>

1972 also was the deadliest year in the conflict, as shown in the following chart:



Deaths related to civil unrest by group responsible, 1966-2018<sup>11</sup>

According to John Coakley and Jennifer Todd, from 1972 responsibility rested with the British government—legally and constitutionally—but from an early stage Irish

<sup>8</sup> *Negotiating a settlement in Northern Ireland*, p. 3

<sup>9</sup> 903-literature class, 'Ireland and "The Troubles": the Literary Echo'

<sup>10</sup> *Faces and Places, Northern Ireland*, p. 160

<sup>11</sup> *Negotiating a settlement in Northern Ireland*, p. 11

government involvement was accepted in practice by the British side: “this was a response to the need to encourage moderate nationalists in NI to accept the legitimacy of the new regime, and it also recognized the implications of the conflict for political, social, and economic life in the Republic”.

Almost from the beginning, it became clear that **three conditions** would have to underlie any new set of structures (...): the new arrangements would have to be based **on a sharing of power between the two communities** in Northern Ireland; they would have to **incorporate an ‘Irish dimension’** (implying institutionalized links between North and South); and they would have to respect the **‘principle of consent’** (interpreted as meaning that a united Ireland would come about only with the democratic consent of a majority in Northern Ireland).<sup>12</sup> (*my emphasis*)

It is only after the republican then loyalist paramilitary organisations declared a ceasefire in 1994 that the end of the conflict could be envisaged. The ceasefires paved the way for several years of Multiparty Talks (1996-98) in which the USA participated through the senator George Mitchell as president of the negotiations. The Belfast Agreement (or Good Friday Agreement) was signed in 1998, then ratified by referendum with a large majority. Not only did it incorporate the three parameters from past negotiations referred to above, but it also addressed many issues in dispute, from security (including a reform of police services) to transborder institutions, from equality and cultural rights to the position of victims<sup>13</sup>. The early release of paramilitary prisoners was also part of the deal.

### 1.3 From the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) to Brexit: a difficult peace

Power sharing institutions started operating in 1999 in Stormont Castle, but were suspended between 2002 and 2007, when former bitterly opposing parties the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin began to co-operate in government together in Northern Ireland. The Assembly was then suspended from 2017 to 2020, and again since May 2022, after the new elections (see the charts on page 8).

The diminution of violence in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century attests to the success of the GFA in bringing peace to NI. Yet, in important respects, achievements—in the domains relating to the three principles on which conflict has been recurrent (sovereignty,

---

<sup>12</sup> *Negotiating a Settlement in NI*, p. 7

<sup>13</sup> *Negotiating a Settlement in NI*, p. 8

democracy and equality)—were uneven and incomplete. The suffering and sense of injustice of the victims’ relatives continued into the post-conflict period. In certain areas and communities, a persistent lack of trust against “themuns”<sup>14</sup> still prevails. Since 1998, although greater security has allowed for the development of neutral shared spaces, for example in commercial centres, the geographical distribution of the population and the increasing number of “Peace Walls” have made sectarianism worse (see Part 2 below). The most significant example of this division lies in education, still controlled by the respective Churches in each community. Although integrated education could be a powerful means to tackle sectarianism from the early age and to change things in NI’s society (Jan Carson, Appendix 2, p. 44), in 2015/2016 only 7% of pupils were registered in the 63 integrated schools existing in NI.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the NI Department of Education has to organise information campaigns and programmes to fight against the recruitment of young people by paramilitary groups in sensitive areas.<sup>16</sup>

Divisions between the two traditions continue to be visible in the landscape and on the streets, from the murals on Peace walls (see Part 2) to July bonfires<sup>17</sup> and Orangemen marches (Illustrations 1 & 2, p. 31). Sectarianism is made worse by communities keeping these specific traditions alive: perceived as the Loyalists’ provocative demonstration of strength by the Nationalists, these traditions revive tensions between communities<sup>18</sup>. No wonder that bonfires are at the heart of Jan Carson’s novel *The Fire Starters*.

This division is also perpetuated by the main political parties, which are either of unionist or nationalist obedience. The UUP (Ulster Unionist Party) and the SDLP (Social Democratic Labour Party) dominated the political scene until the early 2000s. Their respective leaders, David Trimble and John Hume, were awarded the Nobel Prize in 1998 for their role in the peace process. The two leading parties are now the DUP (Democratic Unionist Party), which had opposed the peace process, and Sinn Féin, which supports a United Irish Republic. They are further apart on the political spectrum than the parties they supplanted:

---

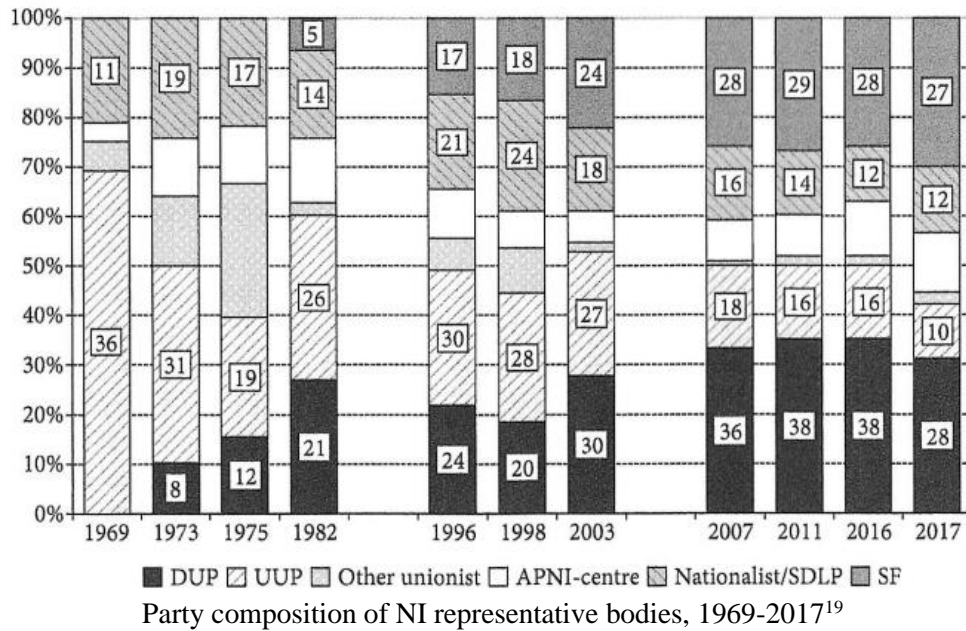
<sup>14</sup> Portmanteau word meaning ‘those ones’ or ‘them folk’, <https://northeastbylines.co.uk/themuns/>

<sup>15</sup> Allison Lira, ‘Segregation and mixing’.

<sup>16</sup> NI Department of Education, *Children and Young People’s Strategy, 2020-2030*, p. 66,

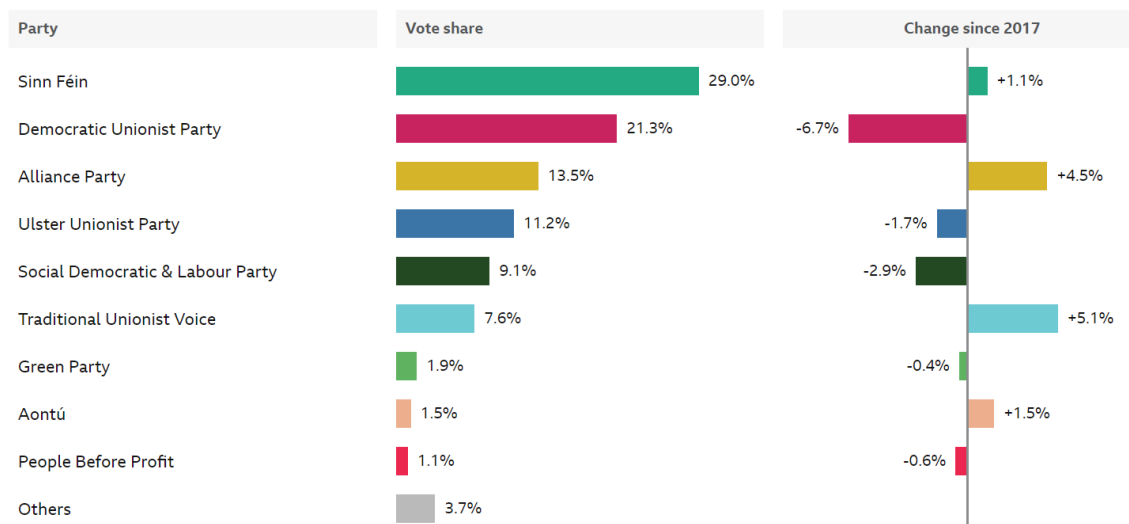
<sup>17</sup> Gigantic bonfires set in the Loyalist areas on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of July for celebrating the victory of the Protestant king William of Orange over the Catholic James II in 1690.

<sup>18</sup> <https://sharedfuture.news/bonfires/>



Notwithstanding the polarisation of the party system, there was always sizeable support for cross-communal politics. Today, NI has a population of about 1,9 million<sup>20</sup>, a growing proportion of whom no longer identifies with the “green” or “orange” traditions. With the demise of the Northern Ireland Labour Party in the 1970s, this position was taken by the Alliance Party (+ 4,5% in 2022 compared to 2017); the Women’s Coalition and the Green Party also played an important role in representing a middle ground<sup>21</sup>.

Since May 2022, Sinn Féin have become the largest party in the Northern Ireland Assembly elections<sup>22</sup>:



<sup>19</sup> *Negotiating a Settlement in NI*, p. 12

<sup>20</sup> 2021 census in NI: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census/2021-census>

<sup>21</sup> *Faces and Places, Northern Ireland*, pp. 155-157, and *Negotiating a Settlement in NI*, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/election/2022/northern-ireland/results>

According to Ms. X (Appendix 2, p. 45), as 2023 will see the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GFA, a fundamental question is raised by some politicians at present: should the GFA be rewritten? Indeed, power sharing according to the GFA is bound to binary politics in NI, but what about the representation of the people who voted for another party, like Alliance for example, which obtained 13,5% of votes?

In *Faces and Places, Northern Ireland 1975-2000*, Karine Bigand and Bernard Lesaing have collected contemporary testimonies from various people “who agreed to share stories about their lives and their relationship with the place where they live... Strung together, their stories draw **a diverse and confident—although not naïve—portrait of contemporary NI**, in contrast with the cheerless manner in which it has too often been depicted” (pp. 110-111). Some extracts of these testimonies can be found in Appendix 3, and they echo Ms. X’s in their will to find an alternative to sectarianism, a third path for people who try to build a future for their country together: “Northern Ireland still has its challenges—the fragility of our institutions, sporadic violence, sectarianism and the unresolved tension over Brexit, to name but a few. If we want to build a society based on justice, fairness and hope, rather than fear, entering a dialogue with people from all backgrounds is essential, without closing any door.” (p. 149)

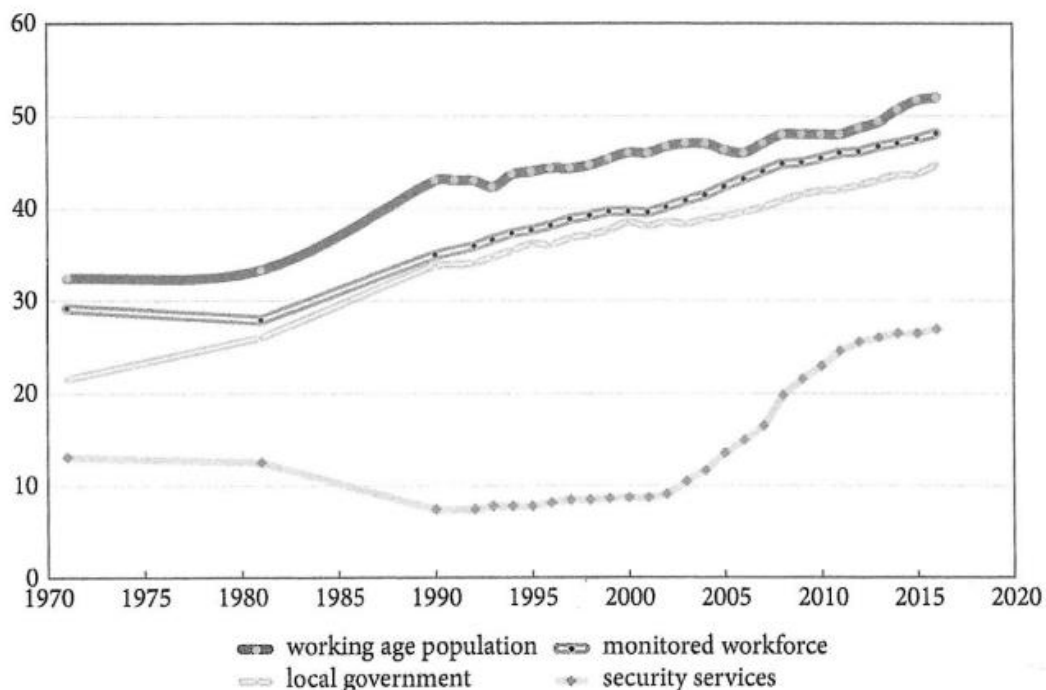
For the first time in NI history, results from the 2021 census showed that 45.7% of inhabitants are Catholic or from a Catholic background compared with 43.5% from Protestant or other Christian backgrounds. The 2011 census figures were 45% Catholic and 48% Protestant. Neither bloc is a majority, but according to *The Irish Times*, “results will fire up those pushing for a united Ireland poll and dishearten an already insecure unionist population”<sup>23</sup> and for *The Guardian*, “the demographic tilt was expected but will still deliver a psychological hit to unionists, who for decades relied on a supposedly impregnable Protestant majority to safeguard Northern Ireland’s position in the UK.”<sup>24</sup> However, Jan told me that we should be cautious with the meaning of these statistics (i.e. how people ticked the survey’s boxes). Many Protestants have disengaged from politics and young people under 30 do not care with sectarian issues nowadays, but rather with day-to-day issues (Appendix 2, p. 45 and Appendix 3, pp. 48-49).

A parallel shift has occurred in the employed workforce: for important sectors (except in security services), the Catholic percentage is now close to the overall percentage:

---

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/social-affairs/2022/09/22/northern-ireland-census-results-analysis/>

<sup>24</sup> [Catholics outnumber Protestants in Northern Ireland for first time | Religion | The Guardian](#)



Catholic percentage of employed workforce, selected categories, 1971-2017

Furthermore, the traditional position of Catholic over-representation in the lower, less prestigious, and less influential positions was replaced by greater access to senior posts. “Steady improvement in the socioeconomic position of Catholics seems to have promoted a softening of Catholic grievance”.<sup>25</sup> According to Coackley and Todd, “this pattern of socioeconomic change has transformed fundamentally the power resources at the disposal of the two communities. The shift was in part a consequence of a demographic change, in part driven by advances in government policies, and in part a product of shifting global economic processes”. However, through fifty years of negotiations and changes, the question of sovereignty still lies hidden behind many disputes in Northern Ireland, such as those “**over the display of flags and emblems, over parades and marches**, and even over the question of tariffs on trade between Northern Ireland and Great Britain that arose during the Brexit negotiations.”<sup>26</sup> (*my emphasis*)

As the negotiations between the Irish and British states, leading to the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), were handled as a top-down process, democratic participation was minimal and the normative principles that underlay this agreement did not embed themselves in public attitudes. Not only was the implementation of the GFA painfully slow, but it was crisis ridden, and **conflict between the NI parties escalated where agreement had not already been reached (notably on culture and on ‘the past’)**. This

<sup>25</sup> *Negotiating a Settlement in NI*, pp. 14-15

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17

danger has intensified with Brexit. “In a way that would have been unthinkable in the 1990s and 2000s, it is the European Union (EU) rather than the UK or the USA that has become the effective guarantor of the GFA in the new world of Brexit.”<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, as an integral part of the UK Withdrawal Agreement, was agreed jointly and ratified by both the EU and the UK. In force since 1 February 2020, it has legal effects under international law. Its aim is to protect the GFA in all its dimensions, maintaining peace and stability in NI, avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland, while preserving the integrity of the EU Single Market.<sup>28</sup> Loyalist anger over the NI protocol, with checks on goods being shipped from Great Britain reinforcing fears over the region’s place in the Union (Illustration 3, p. 32), resulted in months of political tensions and social unrest, culminating in April 2021 in five-day riots<sup>29</sup> in unionist areas in Derry, Belfast and County Antrim (Illustration 4, p. 32). The EU thus proposed bespoke arrangements<sup>30</sup> to benefit NI in October 2021, but in June 2022 the UK (Elizabeth Truss) introduced the “NI Protocol bill” in the House of Commons. If enacted, the bill provides that certain provisions of the NI Protocol would no longer “have effect in the UK”. The EU relaunched the infringement procedure against the UK for failing to properly implement the Protocol that it had paused in 2021<sup>31</sup>. Meanwhile, a legal challenge to the lawfulness of the NI Protocol has been mounted by a group of unionist politicians, arguing that “the Protocol...breaches the Acts of Union and the NI Act.” As the High Court and the Court of Appeal in Belfast dismissed their challenge earlier this year<sup>32</sup>, the case has lately been heard by the UK's Supreme Court, which “will deliver a judgement some time in 2023.”<sup>33</sup> Since the last elections in May 2022, the NI Assembly has not been able to work properly, the DUP refusing to resume power sharing until their issues with the NI Protocol are dealt with.

With so many uncertainties, the recurrent lack of governance and visibility concerning the political and economic future of their country, there is no wonder that many people in NI want to keep the visible, concrete, architectural symbols which have given them a feeling of stability and security for decades, i.e., the peace walls surrounding their communities, which separate and protect them from the unknown—thus feared—*others*.

---

<sup>27</sup> *Negotiating a Settlement in NI*, pp. 552-554

<sup>28</sup> [Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/protocol-on-ireland-and-northern-ireland/)

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/apr/08/northern-ireland-unrest-why-violence-broken-out>

<sup>30</sup> [Commission proposes bespoke arrangements to benefit NI \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/protocol-on-ireland-and-northern-ireland/)

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS\\_ATA\(2022\)733607](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_ATA(2022)733607)

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-63799454>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-63818935>

## Part 2: Peace-walls in NI: from segregation to dark tourism

As we have already approached the issue of segregation in Northern Ireland's society and peace walls as a tangible representation of sectarianism in Belfast and other cities in the first part of this essay, let us now study in detail what peace walls are and why so many of them were erected during the Troubles and after the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). What do people in NI think of peace walls now, and will they ever be removed? Why have they become tourist attractions? Are peace walls the only physical barriers in NI cityscapes or merely the most visible ones?

### 2.1 Segregation and peace walls in Northern Ireland

In May 2013, NI government published a new good relation strategy, "Together: Building a United Community" (T:buc<sup>34</sup>) whose key projects focused on:

- Education
- Young People not in Education, Employment or Training
- Regeneration and deprivation
- Housing
- Learning from the Past

"Segregation is not unique to the urban environment and many of our rural towns and villages are divided not by walls or fences – but by an invisible line in the road or a local landmark. **Where physical barriers exist, the people living on either side are divided in all aspects of life. They live apart, they socialise apart, and their children go to school apart**" (p. 55) ... Interfaces are by no means static and can change over time. The Beyond Belfast Report points to a number of possible locations where interfaces and contested spaces can emerge:"

- **Intersection of middle-class residential areas and working-class areas;**
- Suburban residential areas;
- Parks and other open spaces;
- Shopping centres and town centres; and
- Around schools. (p. 56) (*my emphasis*)

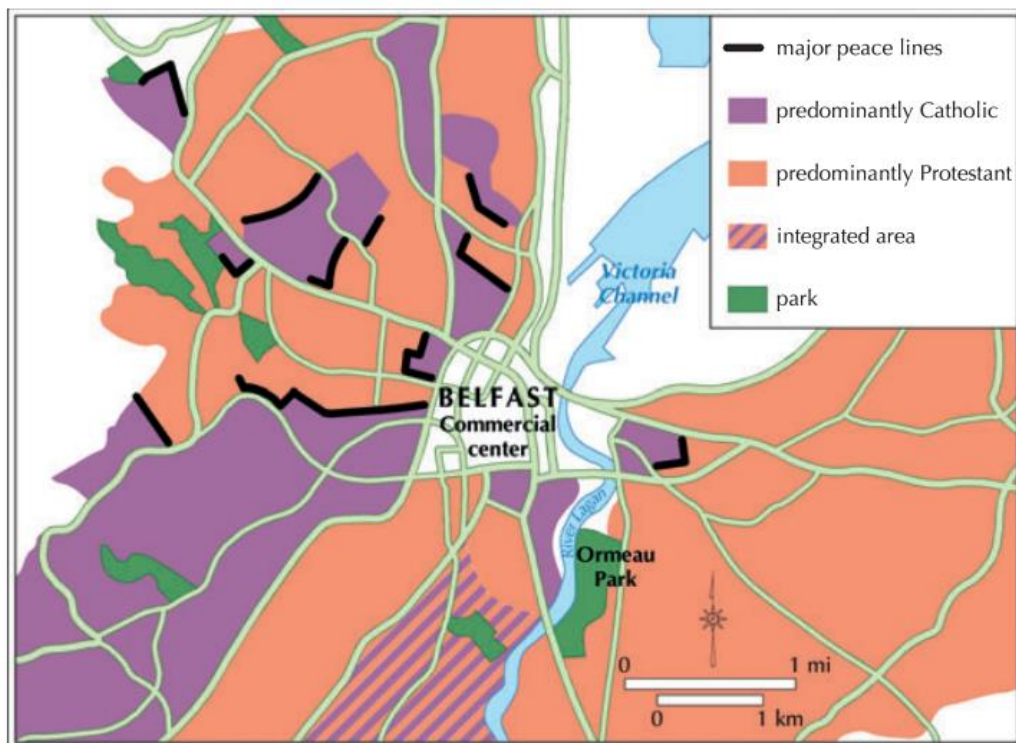
During her interview, Ms. X also underlined the fact that Belfast is divided not only by sectarianism, but also by social classes: "On main roads, like Ormeau Road, you drive from working class areas at the lower end to the richest people areas at the upper end"

---

<sup>34</sup> NI Government, Executive Office. *Together: Building a United Community Strategy*

(Appendix 2, p. 43). And according to Laura Mc Atackney<sup>35</sup>, “peace walls are multi-faceted and... reflect the unforeseen repercussions of their enduring placement:”

They are not simply contemporary material partitions that serve as a crude means of ‘keeping the peace’ between antagonistic near neighbors. They are also not just materializing longstanding divisions based in entrenched historical identities and entwined religious and political affiliations that belong in the 17th century. These walls are spatially significant in dividing communities that were most impacted by the conflict at the time. **Their placement strongly intersects with class** and they reflect the class-based nature of not only the Troubles but **the enduring divisions of the post-conflict state** of Northern Ireland as being essentially **a working-class experience**. (*my emphasis*)



Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods of Belfast and major peace lines<sup>36</sup>

Area	Walls/Fences	Gates
East Belfast	4	
West Belfast	12	6
North Belfast	15	5
Derry City	4	2
Craigavon	6	

Of the 54 structures, 9 have been erected since 1998 (8 fences and 1 gate), although none have been erected since 2008.

<sup>35</sup> ‘The Many Forms and Meanings of (Peace) Walls in Contemporary Northern Ireland’

<sup>36</sup> Brunn, Stanley D and al, ‘Belfast Landscapes: From Religious Schism to Conflict Tourism’

Among these key projects, the government established a 10-year programme **“to reduce and eventually remove by 2023 all interface barriers, working together with the local community.”** According to Department of Justice (DoJ), in 2013 there were 54 interface structures, 41 walls or fences and 13 gates” (T:buc, pp. 20-21). The 2013 figures showed a reduction compared to the 59 peace lines in 2011 (41 walls or fences and 18 gates).

In 2012, research by the Institute of Conflict Research for Belfast Interface Project (BIP) identified 99 different security barriers or defensive architecture across Belfast (T:buc p. 53). In their report ‘Interface Barriers, Peacelines and Defensive Architecture’ (2017), the BIP identified a higher number—116 barriers—remaining across NI, detailing ownership by the DoJ, statutory bodies, those under private ownership and in cases where ownership remains unknown. **“This continuing inconsistency in what constitutes a ‘barrier’** highlights the difficulty in both monitoring the remaining number of Peace Walls across NI and, by extension, evaluating the success of ‘T:buc’ towards the removal of ‘all’ barriers”.<sup>37</sup> (*my emphasis*)

We saw in Part 1 that peace lines or peace walls are a series of barriers in NI that separate republican and nationalist Catholic neighbourhoods from loyalist and unionist Protestant areas. Temporary peace walls have stood in NI since the 1920s, but the majority were built after the events of August 1969, when intense sectarian violence broke out in Belfast and Londonderry, with days of rioting<sup>38</sup>, as narrated by Mc Clements <sup>39</sup>:

Fifty years ago, Conway Street was burning. Homes in the predominantly Catholic street were attacked by a loyalist mob throwing petrol bombs; the RUC responded by baton-charging the Catholic crowd, then sending in armoured cars with heavy machine guns mounted on top. The chaos was repeated in other parts of west and north Belfast, and seven people died.

It was the beginning of **a mass movement of population which would see previously “mixed” streets redesignated as Catholic or Protestant.** Residents were either forced out of their homes<sup>40</sup> or chose to flee, some to refugee camps across the Border (...)

The 1972 Scarman report, carried out by a British judge, later estimated that 179 homes were destroyed in the violence of August 1969, including Bombay Street, which was completely burned down. About 1,800 families left their homes; 1,500 of these were Catholic and 300 Protestant. In total, **up to 15,000 people would be displaced in Belfast in the first 10 years of the Troubles.**

---

<sup>37</sup> IFI, *Peace Walls Programme Attitudinal Survey Summary of Results, November 2019*, p. 9

<sup>38</sup> ‘A history of the peace walls in Belfast’, *The Week*

<sup>39</sup> Freya McClements, ‘Why Belfast residents want to keep their peace walls’

<sup>40</sup> In *Cal*, Protestants neighbours burn the house of Cal and his father out to make them leave the district.

Temporary barricades which were thrown up amid the violence hardened into permanent lines of demarcation: the so-called peace walls which still divide Belfast's streets to this day. **One of the best-known** runs past Conway Street along Cupar Way, **separating the Catholic Falls from the Protestant Shankill**. Corrugated metal sheeting, its green paint reminiscent of Troubles-era security installations, reaches high into the air. It is topped by an even higher wire mesh, **to block missiles** (see Illustration 5, p. 33) (*my emphasis*).

Constructed from brick and iron or steel, some of the walls stand up to 20ft high and extend for miles, **mostly in socially deprived areas**. Some walls are nonetheless permeable, with gates that open by day. However, an insider knowledge is needed to know the rules—to abide by or defy—to cross those gates from one side to another. And people who live alongside peace walls do not often cross these gates. Built to protect people during the 30 years of the Troubles, the walls remain in place today despite the signing of the GFA. Due to their longevity, this means that generations have grown up with a **“psychology of spatial confinement”**.<sup>41</sup> In fact, there are now more peace walls across NI than there were before the GFA, which could suggest enduring mistrust between communities. This opinion is also shared by Fergus O’Sullivan<sup>42</sup>: “although inter-communal violence has dropped greatly and attitudes shifted in recent decades, **the reality that Belfast’s peace walls have both shaped and reflected is complex**. The walls do not just prevent street violence. **The practical and psychological barriers they have put up have fostered a sense of stability that, while ultimately untenable, will require delicate renegotiation.**”

Indeed, consent is the key. The first removal of a peace wall in 2016, on the Crumlin Road in Ardoyne<sup>43</sup>, needed three years of negotiation between residents in Catholic Ardoyne and Protestant Woodvale, until residents felt comfortable taking down this physical and mental barrier (Illustration 6, p. 33). According to Henry Mc Donald, this was a highly significant moment, given that the wall was situated in one of the most dangerous sectarian faultlines in north Belfast, an area where almost a third of all the deaths in the NI Troubles occurred”. A year later, a three-metre-high concrete wall, dividing Springfield Road and Springhill Avenue in West Belfast, was also destroyed after local communities on both sides had agreed to its destruction (Illustration 7, p. 34). It was erected in 1989 to protect residents on either side from sectarian attacks as well as to protect a local police station<sup>44</sup>.

---

<sup>41</sup> Laura Mc Atackney, ‘The many forms and meanings of Peace walls in contemporary NI’, p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> Fergus O’Sullivan, ‘The complex Process of Demolishing Belfast’s ‘Peace Walls’

<sup>43</sup> [Ardoyne peace wall: Martin McGuinness hails replacement as 'sign of progress' - BBC News](#)

<sup>44</sup> Henry Mc Donald, ‘Belfast “peace wall” between communities felled after 30 years’

During her interview (Annex 2), Ms. X said that she does not like Peace Walls: they are often a nuisance for the traffic, especially when the gate is closed, which means that she has to drive a five-mile detour just to go home. Surprisingly, Waze<sup>45</sup> does not take the Peace Walls into account! For her, they are a sign of failure, a symbol of fear and sectarianism. They are still useful, though, because many people are feared by paint bombs or other missiles thrown at them or on their houses. This fear explains why the back of some houses overlooking peace walls often resembles a cage (Illustration 8, p.34). Residents are used to it and would rather have a wall which keep them safe. This is an oft-repeated sentiment on both sides of peace walls, as reported by Freya Mc Clements<sup>46</sup> or Steven Grattan<sup>47</sup>. Both journalists interviewed residents living in the Catholic, working-class enclave of the short Strand located in predominantly Protestant East Belfast:

“Since 2002, we’ve been inundated with bricks, stones, bottles, pipe bombs, shooting, and we just feel safe behind it.”

“The peace wall is better staying up. I don’t want it taken down. We had a questionnaire coming round asking us how we’d feel if the peace wall came down. I’d be away because it’d just be murder on the street.”

“Everybody wants to live in peace, but I can’t see it. They’re talking about bringing these walls down, but that’s definitely not going to happen.”

And the sentiment is the same on the Protestant side of the wall: “my view, that wall stands as long as I’m alive. I have peace and quiet when that wall is there.”

This feeling is more generally confirmed by the results of two surveys carried out in 2019. In the IFI survey<sup>48</sup>, **58%** of Belfast residents view **safety and security** as the main function of the barriers (p. 22).

Moreover, in the *Good Relations Indicators 2019 Report*, Indicator 3.2 (percentage of people who would like to see peace lines come down now or in the near future) shows that in 2019, 54% of all respondents want the Peace Lines to come down now or in the future and **49% of those who live within a few streets** of the Peace Lines want this, i.e., **less than half of the nearby residents**.

---

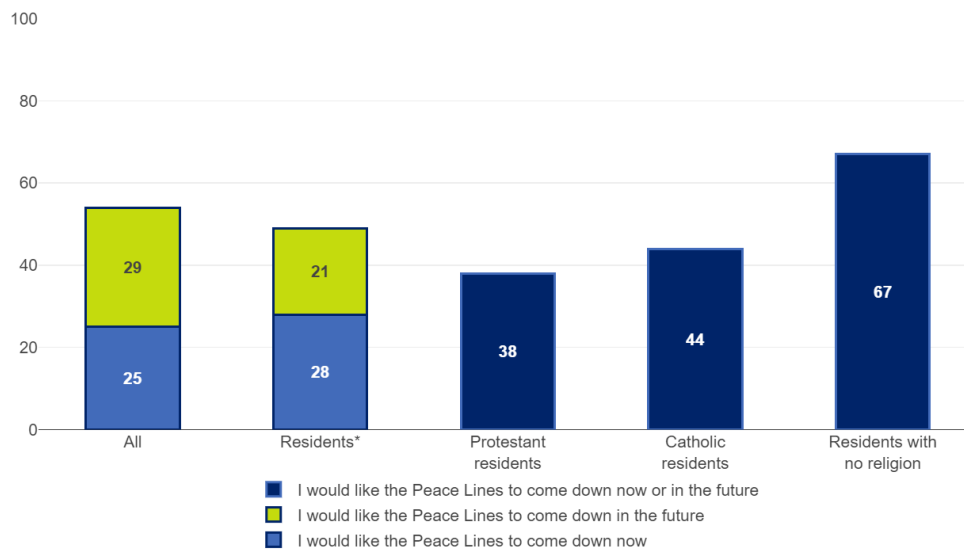
<sup>45</sup> Waze is a traffic application for smartphones

<sup>46</sup> Freya McClements, ‘Why Belfast residents want to keep their peace walls’

<sup>47</sup> Steven Grattan, ‘Northern Ireland still divided by peace walls 20 years after conflict’

<sup>48</sup> IFI, *Peace Walls Programme Attitudinal Survey Summary of Results, November 2019*

Figure 19: % who would like to see peace lines come down now or in the near future



<https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/executiveofficeni/ni-good-relations-indicators-2019-report.html#>

According to the IFI 2019 survey, **76%** of residents in Belfast were strongly in favour of the barriers being removed “within the lifetime of their children or grandchildren”—up from 69% in a 2017 poll (p. 27)—and more than the figure of 54% of the survey above. However, only **19%** wanted the barrier to be removed “**now**” (p. 27), a much lower figure than the **29%** of the survey here above.

As we are reaching the target date (2023) set in the “T:buc” strategy to have all peace walls knocked down, only a small number have been removed. One key reason for this slow progress was the three-year suspension of Stormont from 2017, when power-sharing collapsed during a row over the DUP’s handling of a green energy scandal.<sup>49</sup> About the absence of government since the last Assembly elections in May 2022, Ms. X comments: “37% of the time [since 1998], NI government has been dysfunctional.” Another key reason could be that, despite the fact that the ‘T:buc’ strategy recognized that interface barriers should be removed “working together with the local community”, this was nonetheless another **top-down, political decision** creating anxiety in communities living near the peace walls, that remain “among the most socially and economically deprived in Northern Ireland”<sup>50</sup>. Finally, as EU funds for peace programs, which helped bringing people of the two communities together, will soon dry out after Brexit, hope to get them to know one another and breaking down mental barriers may dwindle similarly. Steven Grattan reports that for cross-community organizations, which received funds to try and remove peace walls and build trust between the two

<sup>49</sup> ‘A history of peace walls in Belfast’

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, and ‘Why Belfast residents want to keep their peace walls’

communities, “mental barriers are the hardest barriers to break down”. Moreover, although many residents want the walls to come down, there are **some groups who still oppose it for their own interests**: “There are still people who are opposed to moving forward in the peace and reconciliation process. On the republican side, you have dissident organizations who are criminal gangs, but they’re using this political cover. The more stable the community is, the more difficult it is for them to operate... These groups also exist in loyalist communities”.<sup>51</sup>

Regarding segregation and mixing in NI, Allison Lira argues in her article<sup>52</sup> that, although the NI’s peace process has undoubtedly produced greater mixing in some areas, **public housing and education remain over 90% single-identity**. If some organic mixing occurred in middle class neighbourhoods, **it did not in working class neighbourhoods**. Although macro level factors continue to play a role, segregation seems to a larger extent now driven by individual and collective choices about where to live, work and children education. This points to the limitations of public policy to further resolve segregation in NI, “while the ‘facts on the ground’ of flags, murals and painted kerbstones portrays a different picture”. Laura Mc Atackney’s article<sup>53</sup> links the limitations of governmental actions to reduce segregation to the subsistence of peace walls, and, in the absence of an official debate about ‘the past’, to the substitution of a shared experience of the conflict curated in a museum by “self-curated” murals and memorials within each community:

While [peace walls] are intended to prevent flashpoint violence, [most] of the time they act to prohibit more normative interactions that one would expect between neighboring communities. This in turn **inhibits the development of knowledge, understanding, and empathy between near neighbors**, particularly as they try to make sense of their experiences of conflict as the state strives for “reconciliation and rapprochement” in the post-conflict context... **Materially ghettoizing communities** ensures that self-curated and one-sided projections of experiences of the conflict (most frequently found in murals and memorials) remain uncritiqued as they materialize on or alongside these walls. The bottom-up, **unofficial memorials** that have appeared within these communities in the post-conflict period tend to have **very particular and skewed views of the past** that, alongside **the ‘othering’ of the community hidden from view**, allow **misrepresentations of the past to be propagated within**. These community memorials that reside alongside peace walls are an important means of ‘reading’ how communities engage with, and reproduce, their understandings of their identity and community—and who is included within it—on *their side* of the peace wall (pp. 47-48). (*My emphasis*)

---

<sup>51</sup> Steven Grattan, ‘Northern Ireland still divided by peace walls 20 years after conflict’

<sup>52</sup> <https://sharedfuture.news/segregation-and-mixing/>

<sup>53</sup> ‘The Many Forms and Meanings of (Peace) Walls in Contemporary Northern Ireland’

## 2.2. Murals on peace walls and ‘dark tourism’

We saw in Part 1 that “dealing with the past” has been a contentious, post-conflict issue since the official decision to not include it in the GFA. The proliferation of unofficial community memorials commemorating the Troubles—designed and placed by those who hold power within communities—have proliferated as a means of filling this official memory vacuum. They have become an important aspect of the landscape of identity in working-class, urban areas of NI as they are often strategically placed close to peace-walls and are significant in mirroring the building materials and monumentality of the peace wall. Thus, **peace wall acts as not just a physical barrier but also a conceptual backdrop to reinforce meaning.**<sup>54</sup>

As epitomized in the “Welcome to Shankhill Road” murals (Illustration 9, p. 35) most community memorials in Protestant, loyalist, East Belfast commemorate male combatants (be it during the Troubles or the Battle of Somme, 1916) who died in violent circumstances, overlooking non-combatants—including women and children—who also experienced conflict, thus reaffirming the overwhelming male nature of public space in the community. This partial view seems particularly unfair knowing that the contribution of women to the GFA negotiations and NI society, through arts and community centres, has been very active (Appendix 2, p. 47). Mc Atackney thus raised a disturbing question:

“While official reports and government initiatives concentrate on countering various forms of paramilitary wall murals and flags being placed by enduring paramilitary groups to project power within their walled communities, there is a lack of consideration as to the intersections of various forms of place identity and **why these one-dimensional and negative place identities have been able to develop unchallenged**”. (p. 52)

In their fascinating essay<sup>55</sup>, Stephanie Kappler and Antoinette Mc Kane bring about some answers to this question. Through the study of three Loyalist murals in East-Belfast (Illustrations 10-12, pp. 36-38), they demonstrate that “the complex, curatorial process behind any single wall, mural or depiction” illustrates not only ongoing conflict line in society, but also “**the curatorial authorities and power games behind the scenes.**”

While during the Troubles, the murals reflected the respective paramilitary group in control and could be read as the visualisation of the power relations within each community, today they convey the complex and sometimes contradictory efforts of

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, pp. 48-50

<sup>55</sup> “‘Post-conflict Curating’: The Arts and Politics of Belfast’s Peace Walls’

communities attempting to negotiate issues of identity, social justice and commemoration by non-violent means (p. 9). Contrary to the traditional painted mural, these three, recent murals were digitally designed and printed on laminated hoarding panels fixed onto the wall surface. They mix large photographs with small-sized texts, which require the viewer to close into close proximity to the mural, “facilitating a more contemplative commemorative experience” (p. 11). Their aim is to improve or promote good relations between locals and immigrant communities through celebrating past, shared experiences. However, when the slogans are translated into multiple languages to promote trust and tolerance amongst culturally different people in Belfast, they do avoid Irish. The exclusion of the largely nationalist 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Irish divisions from the Kitchener mural is conspicuous in a narrative supposed to recognise the contribution of Britain’s colonies to WWI. This point was also underlined by Ms. X during her interview (App. 2, p.45)

While the overtly anti-racist ethos of the three mural examples seems like a positive step towards peace in Belfast, the Loyalist solidarity with Polish, Jewish, and Commonwealth people is expressed through a process of “**othering**”—that is, **the sense of shared identity that is forged through collaboration against the common enemy** (p. 14) ... [T]he violent **othering identity narrative of the Loyalist murals** discussed here is legitimised not only through the symbolism of the murals, but also through the curatorial practices by which they are presented to the public... (p. 15)

Furthermore, according to Kappler and Mc Kane, though it possible that the Patterson mural had been damaged by Republicans, the reaction of the Loyalist association after it was vandalized (Illustration 10, p. 36) implies that the **curators “recast Republicans not just as enemy of Loyalism, but also as criminal enemy of multicultural Britain and its international allies”**. (p. 16)

In contrast, an example from Nationalist, West Belfast shows there are other dynamics at play in the particular significance attached to the peace walls at Bombay Street, in the Clonard area. We saw previously that the burning of this area in August 1969 was psychologically a momentous event for the Catholic community. “It came to represent the realized threat of the Protestant mob, the long-repressed desire by Catholics for social justice, and, through the remobilization of the IRA in response, the resurrection of the use of physical force by nationalists” (Mc Atackney, p. 52). In the Clonard Martyrs’ Memorial Garden, created in 2000/2001, a wall mural commemorating people who were killed during the Troubles is attached to the peace wall (Illustration 13, p. 38). Though the memorial purports to remember the community, the conspicuous absence of the members of the community killed by their own side and the fact that plaques are divided

into civilians and active combatants point rather to a selective and hierarchical memory. “The narrative of the memorial situates the community *on this side* of the wall as unequivocal victims of aggression from the other community and the security forces by referencing what happened on the street in 1969... [These claims] are allowed to proliferate without dispute due to its conceptual as well as physical inaccessibility to those on the *other side* of the peace walls.” (Mc Atackney, pp. 55-56)

According to Mc Atackney (p. 57), **unilateral narratives from each community retain and reinforce segregation**. They have resulted in **place identities that have remained unchallenged due to the materiality of peace walls**, which allow them to be created, maintained and uncritiqued by the *other side*. This opinion is confirmed by a group of students<sup>56</sup> visiting Belfast murals, who found that the walls reflected accurately the cultural, emotional and psychological complexity of the Troubles:

Despite the violent atrocities committed on both sides, nationalist muralists use archetypes to successfully create the perception that they hold the moral high ground... **There is a shared grief, shared history, but the remembrance as exhibited by the walls could not be more distinct. ... [M]utually exclusive narratives of the past and hence present are reflected in the murals**. In an ideal world these murals would belong in museums and not be designed in response to one another. (*My emphasis*)

Belfast murals represent not only an acknowledgement of the communities suffering over decades but also a focal point for international tourists to the area. Belfast has become ‘like an open-air museum, not only in terms of its “dark” appeal to the tourist visitor, but also in the extent to which its urban spaces are utilised in the exhibition and performance of ethnonational identity narratives. This is particularly important in a context in which most of the inhabitants of the city can relate to the segregation, suffering, and contestations that are being curated publicly’ (Kappler & McKane, p. 6).

The term ‘dark tourism’ refers to the desire of the public to visit areas or scenes linked to tragedy or, in some cases, atrocities. For many years, Belfast was deemed a no-go area due to ongoing conflict but twenty years after the GFA, the city attracts people fascinated with its violent and morbid history<sup>57</sup> even if in recent years, efforts have been made to replace conflict-related representations by more inclusive symbols (Illustration 14, p. 39). Thus, dark tourism in NI is mostly linked to the Troubles and may include visits of memorials in Omagh (bomb attack in August 1998), tours in Derry/Londonderry and

---

<sup>56</sup> The Erasmus Living Community of 2019-2020, ‘Belfast and its Peace Walls’.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.connollycove.com/murals-and-museums-dark-tourism-in-belfast/>

black-taxi tours of Belfast murals and peace walls. In fact, **the legacy of the Troubles has become a major element in the city's tourism portfolio, dark tourism meeting now mainstream tourism.** Belfast's other claim to fame that also has a dark twist is the Titanic: its tragic story is now celebrated in a shiny new museum.<sup>58</sup> Tourism as a developing economic activity in NI is humorously illustrated in Jan Carson's novel *The Fire Starters* (Chapter 2, '*Belfast Is For Lovers*')

*Belfast Is For Lovers*, ran the headline... The Northern Ireland Tourism Board wished to see the city pitched against the other great romantics: Paris, Venice, Berlin (before the Wall came down). Understanding that Belfast did not naturally scream passion (guns and drums aside), they'd decided to engineer their own romance...The tourists (...) would soon believe Belfast to be a truly European city. They would forgive the rain and the shops for not opening till lunchtime on a Sunday... 'Belfast is a very safe place to visit. It is a place of hope and love...' The Tourism Board was certain this would happen.

### 2.3. "Hidden Barriers" and other obstacles to removing interface barriers

Though the peace walls still stand as the most visible architectural legacy of the Troubles in Belfast, and as such have been studied extensively by academics, David Coyles has focused his recent research on the hidden barriers and divisive architecture in Belfast, a "Hidden City of unassuming inner-city architecture where everyday pervasiveness masks a capacity to perpetuate conflict-era forces in a post-conflict city." Drawing new information from recently undisclosed military documents, Coyles studied in 'Journey through the Hidden City' (2017) the tactical use of everyday residential architecture for the purposes of improving security and reducing terrorist threat.

At the beginning of the Troubles, NI's Security Forces launched a programme of conspicuous militarised architecture such as hilltop observation towers, bunker-like checkpoint posts, fortified police station blast-walls, steel barricades around the commercial centre of Belfast, and peace-walls. **Control over the road became central to counterinsurgency strategy** (p. 5). If the inner-city housing had been steadily deteriorating since the industrial decline in the opening decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became much worse during the Troubles, when sectarian violence, population movement, and widespread civil unrest increased ethnic consolidation across the city. According to

---

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.dark-tourism.com/index.php/northern-ireland/15-countries/individual-chapters/654-belfast>

confidential government accounts, between 1969 and 1976, more than 60,000 people fled their homes in response to sectarian violence and “direct intimidation” or “fear of intimidation” from paramilitary groups<sup>59</sup>. In 1972, 64,000 houses within Belfast needed to be replaced, improved or repaired. Thus, between 1978 and 1985, the NI authorities implemented a programme of comprehensive social-housing redevelopment. They transformed a permeable gridiron of Victorian terraces into a patchwork of cul-de-sac housing, dead-end streets, footpaths and landscaping **to deliberately limit pedestrian and vehicular movement**, in response to paramilitary networks operating within inner-city communities. NI Authorities decided to keep their awareness of sectarianism and its impact on housing policy unacknowledged in the public sphere: **“official policy orthodoxy kept housing policy and security policy quite separate in the public eye”**.<sup>60</sup> This regime of architectural change was imposed upon those lacking the private property rights or political capital to contest it (pp. 4-5), i.e., the working classes and the poor.

Coyles outlines hidden historical policy biases which continue to shape the urban fabric, for instance in the Inner-East community, where the material consequences are particularly visible. There, the streets reveal “the essence of the ambiguity between designing for safety and designing for security”. A circuitous travel amongst duplicitous obstacles deliberately disorientates the non-local while creating a safe place for those who do actually live there: “you need to know it's there... only residents who would know the route” (p. 11). Formerly open-ended pedestrian alleyways that would once have serviced the back yards of entire rows of terraced housing exist now only to serve two or three rear gardens before terminating in a dead-end. The pedestrianised courtyards entreat privacy through “defensive planning” tactics utilising the natural surveillance provided by living-room windows and the emphasis of personalised thresholds, provision of small gardens and sub-division of communal space. **There is a clear attempt to establish a sense that individual people live here and that they may be watching you**. This might be about the privacy and safety of residents, but it is also about responding to terrorist threat (pp. 11-12).

Coyles demonstrates the “need to urgently reappraise the dominance of a “two communities” narrative in post-conflict architectural discussions. While NI Authorities focus on the inter-community issue of removing “all peace-walls and interfaces by 2023”

---

<sup>59</sup> ‘Hidden barriers and divisive architecture: The role of everyday space’ in conflict and peacebuilding in Belfast’, p. 3

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.4.

the Inner-East makes visible a much larger and more systemically intricate system of **divisive intra-community architecture prevalent across the city**. This is a distinct typology of conflict-architecture that remains unacknowledged in post-conflict policy:

By enshrining the response to a short-term security threat into the very bricks and mortar of the inner-city, the communities of Belfast are left to deal with the myriad pragmatic urban design challenges that such a controlled infrastructure presents. **Traffic management, civic amenity, urban mobility and crime-control all remain affected in inconsistent ways by Troubles-era redevelopment practices...** As such, there are also distinctly humanitarian implications for the communities that continue to be subjected to a **Hidden City of architecture which has institutionalised conflict-era forces and their limitations on freedom**. (pp. 13-14) (*My emphasis*)

Four years later, in his article ‘Hidden barriers and divisive architecture: The role of “everyday space” in conflict and peacebuilding in Belfast,’ Coyles reinforces this warning to NI and Belfast Authorities in charge of urbanism and clearly illustrates the role of architecture and space in conflict and peacebuilding processes through six case studies of areas affected by the installation of hidden barriers (Illustration 16, p. 40). In his study, he identified three different types of hidden barriers:

- inter-community barriers—which do not appear in the list of interfaces recognised by the DoJ—such as the redevelopment of a conflictual residential area into a large industrial estate and business park (Lower Oldpark/Cliftonville interface), or the creation of a large greenspace and a shared link-road which cuts across the intermediate zone (Twinbrook/Areema interface) (pp. 6-9).
- intracommunity hidden barriers, which arose from the intricate mosaic of residential designs that characterised the redevelopment of Catholic and Protestant areas between 1977 and 1985, with small clusters of courtyard housing and dead-end streets, where vehicular connectivity was eliminated and pedestrian permeability significantly reduced (as seen above in Coyles’ 2017 article and here, pp. 10-12)
- invisible boundaries: ‘these barriers emerge out of a multi-layered process combining the impacts of contiguous physical barriers and the psychological consequences of historical and contemporary lived experience. As such, they exist in the movements and behaviors of residents and can be understood in the context of “activity segregation... [K]nowledge of past violent events has permeated through generations to create fear induced movement patterns that see people use “mental maps” to move through the city, influenced by avoidance of “spaces of fear” and gravitation toward “sanctuary spaces.”’ (p. 13)

According to Coyles, the ways in which people move through the city and within and beyond their neighborhoods are highly complex, especially in the areas identified in the case studies which display hidden barriers across the three typologies. These hidden barriers contribute to **the construction of mental maps** as symbolic markers (flags, murals, memorials) or memories of violence and trauma do (p. 15).

If NI government strategy, *Together: Building a United Community* (T:buc, p. 55), alludes to “physical divisions and invisible lines of separation that exist in both urban and rural settings”, there is no suggestion on how to address such issues except removing interfaces and peace walls by 2023. Coyles argues that many government strategies replicate this approach, where hidden barriers and invisible boundaries are alluded to but ultimately ignored in favour of a focus on a designated register of such interfaces. Tackling large-scale divisions such as peace walls is vital to addressing some of the urban legacies of the conflict. But, given **the widespread and deceptive nature of the hidden barriers** he identified, such an **approach may have limited impact over time in terms of the actual lived experience of those surrounded by hidden barriers** (pp. 16-17). He thus concludes:

Communities in Belfast are no longer forced apart by top-down planners, security officials and architects using roads, parks, shops and tree lines, as in in the 1970s and 1980s. Instead, we contend, **the divisions of the past are now maintained and managed by communities, politicians and policymakers who shy away from addressing micro intra-community and inter-community division.** This is achieved by ignoring (or failing to see) the full historical legacy and persistence of hidden barriers and invisible boundaries on the one hand, and by the implementation of wide-ranging policies often geared toward the most visible forms of separation such as peace walls. **Of course, the removal of “visible” barriers such as peace walls would be welcomed,** but our research suggests that **the everyday reality of a multitude of other deeply entrenched local hidden barriers would mitigate against the real impact of removing peace walls,** a fact largely ignored at a policy and political level. (p. 18) (*My emphasis*)

## CONCLUSION

Although the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) brought tremendous hopes in 1998 for building a sustainable peace and a more balanced society in Northern Ireland, and has been successful in some areas—as the diminution of violence in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century attests to it—twenty-five years later its limitations in reducing the deeply-rooted divisions in NI society, such as sectarianism and political tensions, legitimately raise the question of its revision.<sup>61</sup> Shared power in Stormont has been dysfunctional for many years since 1998, and this lack of proper governance has impeded efficient progress in NI economic and social areas, despite the huge international funds allocated to the peace process. Furthermore, if this governance model, described in the GFA, reflects an enduring duality within the main political parties—which are either of unionist or nationalist obedience—it does not take into account a growing proportion of the population who prefer another way than the green or orange traditions, such as the voters for Alliance, the party which arrived third in the last Assembly elections (in May 2022) with 13,5% of votes. The new generation of young adults, born after the signature of the GFA, though recognising NI's troubled past, wants to build now their own country's future. That is mainly true for middle-class young people. In the most socially deprived areas of NI's biggest cities, though, paramilitary groups still recruit young people, even if government's placards in the streets warn them against this danger. This is only a piece of evidence that class divisions, as much as sectarianism, impede deep, social changes to take place in NI. Working-class areas were the most affected during the Troubles and are still the most impacted by sectarianism: peace walls continued to be built there after the signature of the GFA and until 2008. If some mixing occurred in middle-class areas, it did not in working class areas: public housing and education remain 90% single-identity.

The reality that Belfast's peace walls have shaped is complex: if these physical barriers were built to prevent street violence, they have also fostered a “psychology of spatial confinement”, a sense of security and stability, particularly among the generations who have experienced the Troubles. No wonder that only 29% of the people living near the interface barriers want them to be removed “now”. In each community, there are groups who still oppose the reconciliation process and the walls to come down, and unofficial community memorials and murals commemorating the Troubles are curated by

---

<sup>61</sup> <https://constitution-unit.com/2021/09/03/renewing-and-reviving-the-belfast-good-friday-agreement/>

those who hold power within communities. As the issue of “dealing with the past” was deliberately not included in the GFA, community memorials have filled this vacuum. Peace walls act not just as physical barriers, but also as conceptual backdrops to reinforce the meaning of the murals. Despite the shared grief, the shared history, the peace building programmes and the huge work which has been carried out by community workers to make people from different communities meet and talk together, “the remembrance as exhibited by the wall murals could not be more distinct.” In each community, the unilateral narratives of the past and present reflected in the murals retain and reinforce segregation. The place identities they have created have remained unchallenged by *the other side* due to the materiality of peace walls. Some paramilitary murals have been replaced by more positive messages, aiming to promote good relations between locals and immigrants’ communities through celebrating past and shared experiences; however, a close analysis of some of these new murals shows a bias in the representation of *the other side* as a common enemy.

While some peace walls have become tourist attractions, these interface barriers were also targeted in the 2013 government strategy “Together: Building a United Community” (T:buc) as obstacles maintaining sectarianism, thus **a ten-year programme was established to reduce or remove peace walls by 2023**. As we are soon reaching this deadline, very few walls have been felled and sectarianism is still a prime issue in NI’s society. In our study, we have identified many reasons which can explain this poor result: the lack of sustained governance to support this policy, the fact that this top-down decision was not endorsed by many of the people directly concerned—who still feel protected by these walls, the influence of some groups within communities which retain their power through sectarianism. We also realised that, regarding segregation, peace walls only act as the visible part of the iceberg. They are merely the physical barriers which have been officially registered by government institutions. Psychological barriers, “the hardest to remove” according to a community worker, have also been alluded to. However, the hidden, architectural barriers linked to the massive housing redevelopment during the Troubles—and still unacknowledged by NI Authorities in charge of urban regeneration—are certainly a powerful factor in the sectarian status-quo.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary sources

Coakley, John and Todd, Jennifer. *Negotiating a Settlement in Northern Ireland, 1969-2019*. Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 2020.

Carson, Jan. *The Fire Starters*. Transworld Ireland, 2019.

Friel, Brian. *Plays 1, The Freedom of the City* (1973). London (UK): Faber & Faber, ebook edition, 2013

International Fund for Ireland, *Peace Walls Programme Attitudinal Survey Summary of Results, November 2019*. [Final\\_IFI\\_Report\\_2019.pdf \(internationalfundforireland.com\)](#), accessed on 05.12.2022.

Mac Laverty, Bernard. *Cal*. Croydon (GB): Vintage, 1998.

Maillot, Agnès. *L'IRA et le conflit nord-irlandais*. Caen (France) : Presses universitaires de Caen, 2018.

NI Department of Education, *Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030*, published on 22.01.2021, <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/children-and-young-peoples-strategy-2020-2030>, accessed on 25.10.2022

NI Government, Executive Office. *Together: Building a United Community Strategy*, Published on 23 May 2013. Link accessed on 17.11.2022: <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/together-building-united-community-strategy>

### Secondary sources

AFP, 'Northern Ireland: a fragile peace tested by Brexit', *I24News* online, 09 April 2018. <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/europe/171852-180409-northern-ireland-a-fragile-peace-tested-by-brexit>, accessed on 21.11.2022.

'A history of the peace walls in Belfast', *The Week* online, 21.04.2021. <https://www.theweek.co.uk/northern-ireland/952591/a-history-of-the-peace-walls-in-belfast>, accessed on 21.11.2022.

Brunn, Stanley D; Byrne, Sarah; McNamara, Louise and Egan, Annette. 'Belfast Landscapes: From Religious Schism to Conflict Tourism'. *The American Geographical Society's focus on geography*, 2010, Vol.53 (3), p.81-91.  
<https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.bases-doc.univ-lorraine.fr/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1949-8535.2010.00011.x>, accessed on 05.12.2022

Coyles, David. 'Journeys through the Hidden City: Giving visibility to the Material Events of conflict in Belfast'. *Environment and planning. D, Society & space*, 2017, Vol.35 (6), p.1053-1075.

Coyles, David, Hamber, Brandon & Grant, Adrian. 'Hidden barriers and divisive architecture: The role of "everyday space" in conflict and peacebuilding in Belfast'. *Journal of urban affairs*, 2021, p.1-24.

Devenport, Mark. 'Northern Ireland peace walls should 'come down by 2022'', *BBC News* online, 24.01.2013. [Northern Ireland peace walls should 'come down by 2022' - BBC News](#), accessed on 21.11.2022.

*Faces and Places, Northern Ireland 1975-2020*. Photographs by Bernard Lesaing. Texts by Karine Bigand, Jean Kempf, Bernard Lesaing and Peter Mc Cavana. Les Editions de Juillet, 2020.

Gillespie, Raymond. 'After the flight: The plantation of Ulster'. *History Ireland*, July/August 2007. <https://1641.tcd.ie/learning/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/After-the-Flight-The-Plantation-of-Ulster.pdf>

Grattan, Steven. 'Northern Ireland still divided by peace walls 20 years after conflict', *The World* online, 14.01.2020. <https://theworld.org/stories/2020-01-14/northern-ireland-still-divided-peace-walls-20-years-after-conflict>, accessed on 21.11.2022.

Kappler, Stefanie & McKane, Antoinette. '"Post-conflict Curating": The Arts and Politics of Belfast's Peace Walls'. *De arte*, 2019, Vol.54 (2), p.4-21.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00043389.2019.1613747>, accessed on 09.10.2022

Lira, Allison. 'Segregation and Mixing', *Shared Future News online*, 24 October 2019: <https://sharedfuture.news/segregation-and-mixing/> , accessed on 03.12.2022.

McAttackney, Laura. 'The Many Forms and Meanings of (Peace) Walls in Contemporary Northern Ireland'. *Review of International American studies*, 2018, Vol.11 (1), p.39-61. <https://www.journals.us.edu.pl/index.php/RIAS/article/view/6383> accessed on 09.10.2022

McClements, Freya. 'Why Belfast residents want to keep their peace walls', *The Irish Times* online, 16.08.2019. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/why-belfast-residents-want-to-keep-their-peace-walls-1.3987423>, accessed on 21.11.2022.

McDonald, Henry. 'Belfast 'peace wall' between communities felled after 30 years', *The Guardian* online, 20.09.2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/sep/20/belfast-peace-wall-between-communities-felled-after-30-years>, accessed on 21.11.2022.

O'Sullivan, Feargus. 'The Complex Process of Demolishing Belfast's 'Peace Walls'', *CityLab*, 16.08.2016. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-08-16/belfast-s-peace-walls-are-being-demolished>, accessed on 21.11.2022.

The Erasmus Living Learning Community of 2019–2020. 'Belfast and its Peace Walls'. *Peace review* (Palo Alto, Calif.), 2020, Vol.32 (2), p.198-203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2020.1836443> accessed on 09.10.2022.

## APPENDIX 1 - ILLUSTRATIONS

**Illustration 1**



Orange Order members march in Belfast, July 12th, 2022. Photograph: Paul Faith/AFP via Getty  
<https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/social-affairs/2022/09/22/northern-ireland-census-results-analysis/>

**Illustration 2**



Craigyhill bonfire in Larne. Picture: Philip Magowan / PressEye  
<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/galleries/news/northern-ireland-bonfires-2021-photos-40605677.html>

## APPENDIX 1 - ILLUSTRATIONS

**Illustration 3**



Loyalist tag against the NI Protocol, AFP/Paul Faith  
[Brexit : cinq minutes pour comprendre les tensions en Irlande du Nord - Le Parisien](#)

**Illustration 4**



Youths set fire to a “Peace Wall” gate at Springfield Road/Lanark Way in Belfast on 7 April 2022  
Photograph Charles McQuillan/Getty Images,  
[Northern Ireland unrest: why has violence broken out? | Northern Ireland | The Guardian](#)

## APPENDIX 1 - ILLUSTRATIONS

### Illustration 5



Jess Manville, *Peace walls dividing the Falls and Shankill Roads in the western part of Belfast.*  
[Northern Ireland: A Fragile Peace Tested By Brexit - I24NEWS](https://www.i24news.com/news/2016/08/20/northern-ireland-a-fragile-peace-tested-by-brexit/)

### Illustration 6



Replacement of Ardoyne peace wall, 2016: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-37046677>

## APPENDIX 1 - ILLUSTRATIONS

### Illustration 7



The wall dividing Springfield Road and Springhill Avenue in west Belfast is destroyed. Photograph: PA, [Belfast 'peace wall' between communities felled after 30 years | Northern Ireland | The Guardian](#)

### Illustration 8:



The back yards of houses at Bombay Street, Falls Road side of the peace wall in West Belfast (L McAtackney 2014)<sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> L. McAtackney, 'The Many Forms and Meanings of (Peace) Walls in Contemporary Northern Ireland', p. 53

# APPENDIX 1 - ILLUSTRATIONS

## Illustrations 9



“Welcome To The Shankill Road. We are Proud, Defiant, Welcoming” with images of Belfast in the blitz, the Orange Order and bonfires on July 12th, boxing and soccer, and contemporary murals in the local area. The mural is above the security gates on Northumberland Street.

© 2013 Extramural Activity, <https://extramuralactivity.com/2013/04/03/proud-defiant-welcoming/>



<https://extramuralactivity.com/2019/07/22/welcome-to-the-shankill-road/#jp-carousel-23804> this is the new ‘Welcome To The Shankill (Road)’ mural in Gardiner Street, © 2019 Extramural Activity, but instead of “Proud, Defiant, Welcoming” we now have “Proud, Resilient, Welcoming”

# APPENDIX 1 - ILLUSTRATIONS

## Illustrations 10



Lt Col John Henry Patterson mural, Beverley Street (2015), © 2015 Extramural Activity, <https://extramuralactivity.com/2015/05/>

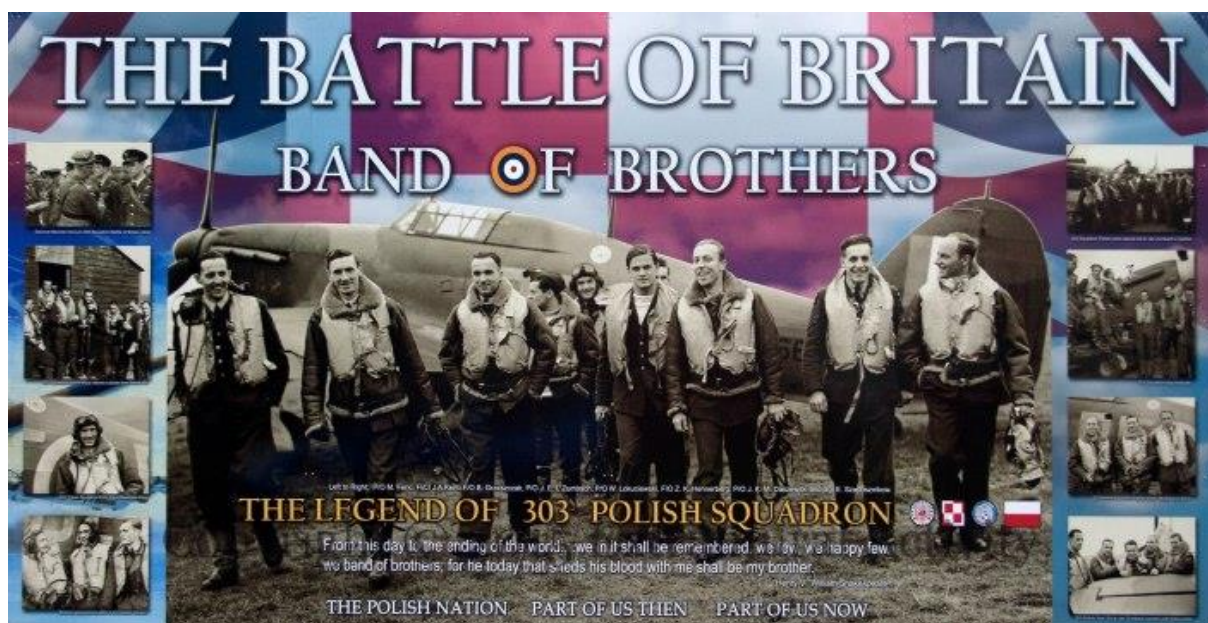


A fire was lit at the base of the Patterson mural, prompting the notice on the railings above.

<https://extramuralactivity.com/2016/09/02/where-is-the-reconciliation/>

# APPENDIX 1 - ILLUSTRATIONS

## Illustrations 11



A detail of the 'Band of Brothers' mural on the corner of Beverley Street and Northumberland Street commemorates the role of Polish airmen in WWII. (2015) © 2015 Extramural Activity



<https://extramuralactivity.com/2015/10/14/love-demands-sacrifice/>

## APPENDIX 1 - ILLUSTRATIONS

### Illustration 12



© 2017 Extramural Activity. This mural in Northumberland Street replaced part of the previous *Welcome to the Shankhill* mural, seen in illustration 9

<https://extramuralactivity.com/2017/06/07/to-all-foreign-nationals-across-the-empire/>

### Illustration 13



## APPENDIX 1 - ILLUSTRATIONS

Clonard Martyrs Memorial Garden, Photo by W. Fischer, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=134620>

**Illustration 14**

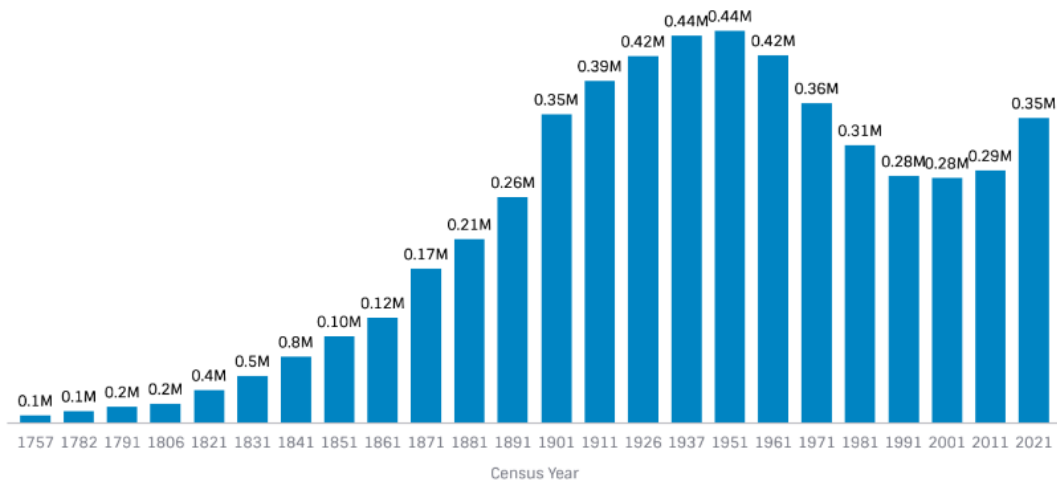


Part of the murals in Belfast promoting the end of sectarianism:

[Murals and Museums: Dark Tourism in Belfast - ConnollyCove](#)

**Illustration 15**

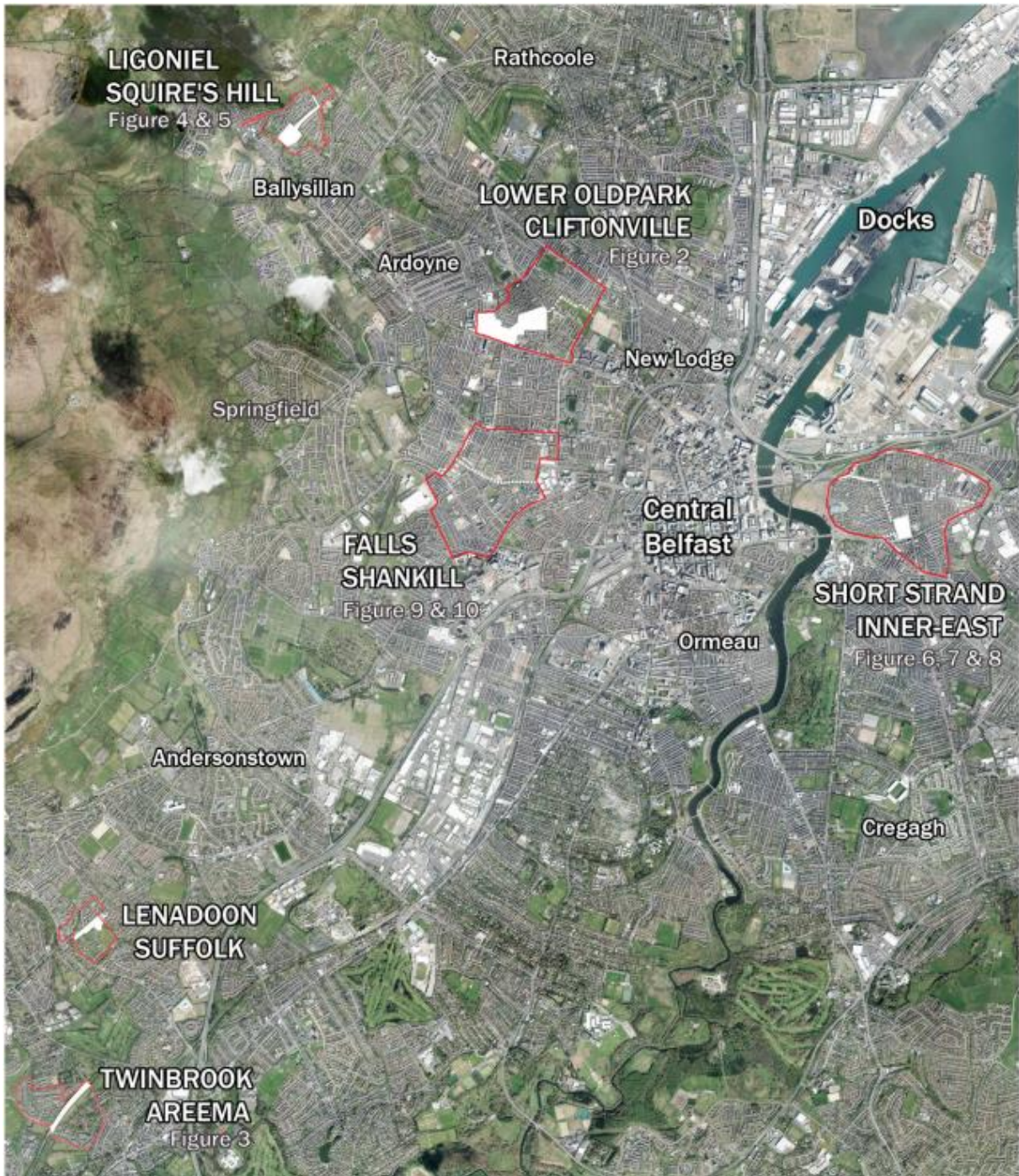
### Belfast Population by Year



<https://populationdata.org.uk/belfast-population/>

APPENDIX 1 - ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 16



Map of Greater Belfast area to show the six case-study areas examined in the research project, with adjacent prominent neighborhoods.

D. Coyle and Al, 'Hidden barriers and divisive architecture: The role of "everyday space" in conflict and peacebuilding in Belfast.

## APPENDIX 2

### **Preliminary Note:**

The interview with Ms. X, a NI citizen who was staying in Nancy in 2022, was held on 29 November 2022, from 10:30 to 12:00.

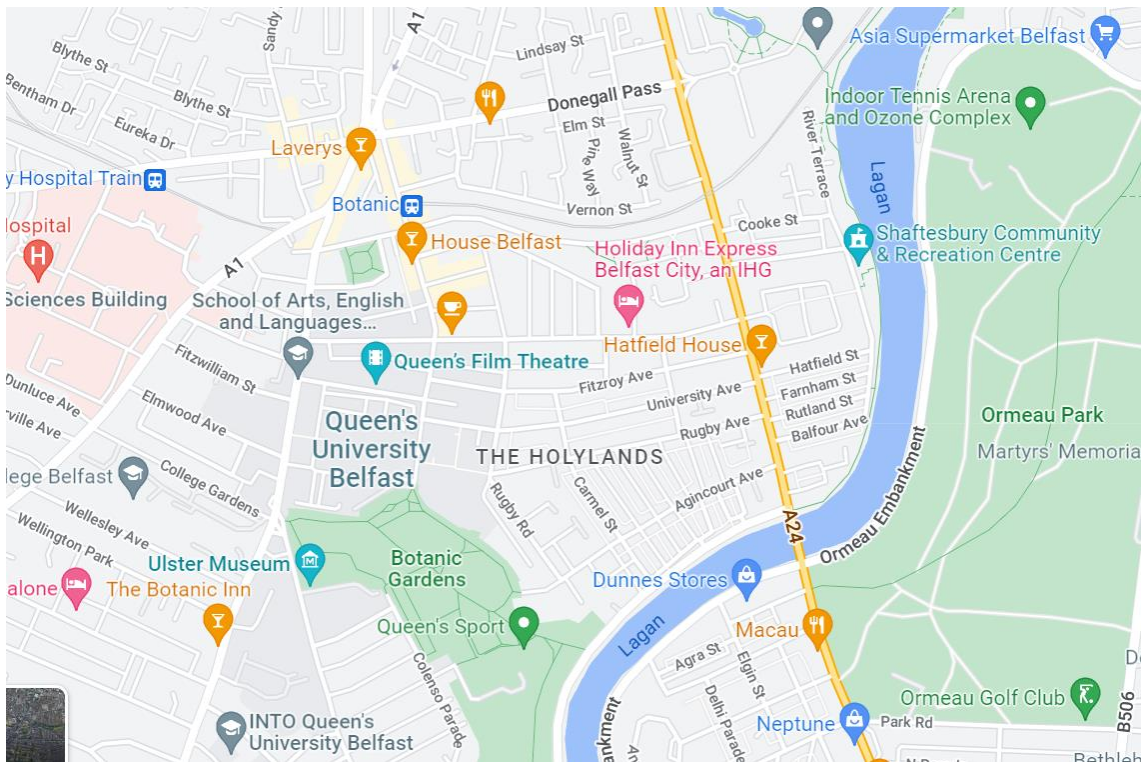
I had prepared the following questions as a thread for the interview:

- 1) What is your experience of living in East Belfast? Do you live in a mixed area or a 100% Protestant district? Are there some “Peace lines” or “Peace walls” in it?
- 2) What is your opinion about them? Do you think your neighbours would prefer to keep them? Have you witnessed the destruction of one of them since 2013?
- 3) What do you think about the Peace Walls as tourist attractions?
- 4) Most murals show male combatants from each side. What about women in the narratives on these walls?
- 5) Peace walls are like the tip of the iceberg: what about other hidden barriers which are not taken into account in the 2013 government strategy to “remove the barriers” between communities?
- 6) What are the main economic activities in today’s NI apart tourism?
- 7) Last census in 2021: do you think Protestants will feel more threatened/vulnerable since the Catholic population in NI has outnumbered the Protestant one?
- 8) What do you think will happen to the shared governance in the coming months? (NI government collapsed after the last elections in May 2022).

## Notes from Ms X.'s interview

(held on 29 November 2022, in Nancy)

Ms X arrived in Belfast in 1998, just after the Omagh bombing<sup>63</sup> in August 1998. She went to Queen's University, located near Ormeau Park in a rich and mixed district in the South of the city. She underlines the fact that Belfast is not only divided by sectarianism, but also by social classes. On main roads, like Ormeau Road, you drive from working class areas at the lower end to the richest people areas at the upper end.



Ms X lives now in a 100% Protestant, loyalist, area in East Belfast. Green spaces are scarce, especially in most working-class areas, with a high density of population and dwellings. Young people have nowhere to go and meet, only the streets.

<sup>63</sup> The Omagh bombing was a car bombing on 15 August 1998 in the town of Omagh in County Tyrone, NI. It was carried out by the Real Irish Republican Army, a Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) splinter group who opposed the IRA's ceasefire and the Good Friday Agreement, signed earlier in the year. The bombing killed 29 people and injured about 220 others, making it the deadliest single incident of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omagh\\_bombing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omagh_bombing)

## APPENDIX 2

On Newtownards Road, for example, there is ‘The Union Jack Shop’, and on many shop windows you can read stickers with the mention “Property of the LVF<sup>64</sup>”. Indeed, these shops pay a tax to them.



However, part of this loyalist area is “gentrifying” with hipsters’ shops such as Mac Donald’s and Starbucks, and LGBT organisations, etc. Young middle-classes and immigrants also try to get along with working-class loyalists.

Ms X. does not like Peace Walls. They are often a nuisance for the traffic, especially when the gate is closed, which means she may have to drive a five-mile detour just to go home. Waze<sup>65</sup> does not take the Peace Walls into account! For her, they are a sign of failure, a symbol of fear and sectarianism. They are still useful, though, because many people are feared by things thrown at them or on their houses.

She recommends reading Stacey Gregg’s play<sup>66</sup> *Shiboloth*, which deals with Peace Walls.

Integrated education could be a powerful means to tackle sectarianism from the early age, to change things in NI society. A lot of money was put in Communities art, allowing adults from both sides to meet and talk together, but after Brexit the funds are gone now.

<sup>64</sup> The Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) is a small Ulster loyalist paramilitary group in Northern Ireland. It was formed by Billy Wright in 1996 when he and his unit split from the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) after breaking its ceasefire.

<sup>65</sup> Waze is a traffic application for smartphones

<sup>66</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5GCUNZKnzE&ab\\_channel=AbbeyTheatre](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5GCUNZKnzE&ab_channel=AbbeyTheatre)

## APPENDIX 2

Tourism is one of the main economic activities in Northern Ireland now, but it is a pity that it is mainly “dark tourism” (the murals on Peace Walls, The Titanic, etc.) “Couldn’t we rather create a museum about C. S. Lewis?!” Creating a museum about The Troubles, for example in the Maze<sup>67</sup>, would be quite an “impossible mission”, because narratives from each side are pole apart. The “past” is one of the most contentious issues. Let’s take an example: the Battle of the Somme (WWI, 1916) has always been commemorated by loyalists, while nationalists who died in the Great War were forgotten by both sides, overlooked by the Republican narrative of the 1916 Easter Rising<sup>68</sup>.

“For ten years (up to 2022), each commemoration has been contentious,” including that of the partition of Ireland in 1921... The fact is that it is upper-classes or academics people who make decisions about these celebrations, working-classes are not consulted. Moreover, the Brexit has revived tensions and violence, like the five days of riots in April 2021 linked to the loyalist anger against the Northern Ireland Protocol.<sup>69</sup> Thirteen- or fourteen-year-old boys were rioting but they did not know why. Sport coaches and community workers tried to stop them every night so that they do not ruin their lives with a criminal record.

About the results of the 2021 census, and the newspapers titles about a “majority” of Catholics in NI population, Ms X comments that we should be cautious with the meaning of figures: “figures should be unpacked.” Young people under 30 do not care with sectarian issues nowadays, but with day-to-day issues. She lately attended a Shared Island conference<sup>70</sup> in which the question about the necessity to reshuffle the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) was raised. Indeed, power sharing according to the GFA is bound to binary politics in NI, but what about the representation of people who voted for a third party, like Alliance<sup>71</sup> for example? 2023 will see the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GFA: should it be rewritten? Brexit has brutally changed many things; people had not enough been informed of the consequences before the referendum. A new referendum about joining

---

<sup>67</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HM\\_Prison\\_Maze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HM_Prison_Maze)

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.irishnews.com/news/2016/06/30/news/the-somme---ulster-unionism-s-blood-sacrifice-584061/>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/apr/08/northern-ireland-unrest-why-violence-broken-out>

<sup>70</sup> It could be the Shared Island Dialogue on Arts and Culture which took place on 13 October 2022: <https://www.wheel.ie/notices/shared-island-dialogue-arts-and-culture-13-oct>. The Government’s Shared Island initiative was launched by the Taoiseach, Micheál Martin TD, to work with all communities and traditions on the island to build consensus around a shared future underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement. (*my comment*)

<sup>71</sup> [https://www.allianceparty.org/our\\_vision](https://www.allianceparty.org/our_vision)

## APPENDIX 2

Ireland would have to be carefully prepared, answering people's questions about concrete consequences like NHS, passports, etc. There are some very legitimate fears to be addressed before. Then Ms X refers to the question about a second devolution vote in Scotland, which was recently raised in the newspapers<sup>72</sup>.

She adds that contrary to the Catholics, Protestants have disengaged from politics, letting extremists like Jamie Bryson<sup>73</sup>— “the Donald Trump of NI” —brainwash vulnerable young people while “there's no reasoning behind his arguments.”

About the fact that there has been no government since the last Assembly elections in May 2022, Ms X gives the following information: “37% of the time [since 1998], NI government has been dysfunctional.” People suffer because the Stormont government thus cannot pass important laws. [There are significant gaps between equality law in Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland (NI); gaps which have widened following the introduction of single equality legislation—the Equality Act 2010—in Great Britain<sup>74</sup>]. (...). Despite the GFA and the decommissioning, paramilitary activities and violence still go on in some areas of Northern Ireland. NI government's placards in the street warn young people against enrolling into paramilitary groups. Ms X recommends watching the documentary film ‘A Mother Brings Her Son to Be Shot’ (2017).<sup>75</sup>

Concerning NI economy, there was four main activities: agriculture, fishing, linen and shipyards. Now 30% of people are employed in local government or civil service. There could be a huge contract for the shipyards, to be signed in the future with the Navy, and a revival of the defence sector<sup>76</sup> (arm factories in Belfast). Ms X reflects on the fact that while she grew up in a Protestant, evangelist community in which alcohol, dancing and more generally arts were not permitted by religion, some men were working in weapons factories, whose production brings about death.

---

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-50813510>

<sup>73</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamie\\_Bryson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamie_Bryson)

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.equalityni.org/Delivering-Equality/Addressing-inequality/Law-reform/Tabs/Gaps-in-equality-law>

<sup>75</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVylDf8f5qQ&ab\\_channel=BlinderFilms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVylDf8f5qQ&ab_channel=BlinderFilms) and

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Mother\\_Brings\\_Her\\_Son\\_to\\_Be\\_Shot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Mother_Brings_Her_Son_to_Be_Shot)

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/northern-ireland/thales-belfast-plant-to-expand-with-93m-missiles-deal-37458951.html>, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/belfast-made-bazookas-pave-the-way-for-defence-sectors-revival-lh62p227c>

## APPENDIX 2

New significant economic activities are tourism, the film industry (shipyards warehouses are used as studios), call centres, and a few investors have been interested in the geographical location of NI, between America and the rest of Europe.

Drawing from the usual absence of women in the murals (typically male and military subjects), I raised the question of women's voice in NI. Ms X answered that through the Women's Coalition<sup>77</sup>, women were very active in the Peace negotiations, even if they did not appear in the photos celebrating the GFA signature. Mo Mowlam and Monica Mc Williams were influential politicians during the agreement negotiations<sup>78</sup>. More recently, Professor Katy Hayward is a sought-after expert on Brexit, the Irish border and the peace process, and a leading political sociologist on the island of Ireland<sup>79</sup>. Susan Mc Kay is a journalist and wrote *Northern Protestants – An Unsettled People*, that she described as “a study of the people I uneasily call my own”, and *Bear in Mind These Dead*, a history of The Troubles from the perspective of those who were bereaved. She has produced award-winning documentaries for radio and television, including *The Daughter's Story*, about the daughters of Fran O'Toole, one of the victims of the Miami Showband Massacre in 1975.<sup>80</sup>

Women can go to Women's Centres, where they can reach the “critical mass” to be heard. The centres provide “an oasis for some of the most vulnerable people in the local community through a carefully nurtured network of women. After receiving funding from the EU as part of the Good Friday agreement, many women's centres sprung up across Northern Ireland, but have since been forced to close because of financial insecurity”<sup>81</sup>. They are also active in socially engaged theatres. [Some community dramas were referred to during an IDEA seminar on 14 October 2022 by Helene Alfaro, in her lecture entitled ‘Conflict-transformation and the Arts in Northern Ireland’.]

---

<sup>77</sup> “As advocates for peace and human rights, the NIWC was successful in engaging women in politics and campaigning against sectarian violence, but following electoral losses in 2003, the NICW formally disbanded in 2006”: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Northern-Ireland-Womens-Coalition>

<sup>78</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mo\\_Mowlam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mo_Mowlam) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monica\\_McWilliams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monica_McWilliams)

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.qub.ac.uk/News/find-an-expert/ProfessorKatyHayward.html>

<sup>80</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan\\_McKay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan_McKay)

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/16/space-to-be-fight-keep-windsor-womens-centre-open-belfast>

**Extracts from some testimonies collected by Karine Bigand and Bernard Lesaing in *Faces and Places, Northern Ireland 1975-2020***

**From a legislation clerk living in Belfast (p. 130):**

“... For twenty years I have worked in the peace-making Northern Irish Assembly... The UK’s separation from the European Union was a turbulent and worrying time in devolved politics, given the bridging influence of Europe in the transition to peace here. I felt a bit adrift, and there was a question mark over the work everyone has been doing since 1998. When there is such turmoil, simple acts of belonging to nature and connecting to community put things in perspective... Since the Brexit referendum a new community identity has forged in global awareness—that of humans against extinction. New norms and imperatives. Opportunities to together become responsible custodians of the natural world. It’s great that the Assembly is back to connect and share initiative. Because this is a conversation for everybody. And we are nature after all.”

**From a student living in Bangor (p. 137):**

“...The legacy of the Troubles perhaps is not talked about as much as it should be, which means young people growing up here today are still impacted by the events of the past. It is very easy to grow up in an environment of division as they attend separate schools and play for separate sports teams, often simply based on their cultural or religious background. I have been very fortunate to be involved in many projects aimed at bringing people together, working with various organisations to ensure that the voice of young people is listened to on issues such as Brexit, mental health, education and poverty...”

**From a musician living in Belfast (p. 142):**

“... Now that it’s peaceful, it’s a great place to live. It’s vibrant and full of artists. The oppression that caused famine of artistic expression in the height of the Troubles germinated an underground sub culture. Eventually with the arrival of peace, artists emerged from the darkness in all genres. Now we have a flourishing thriving strong city bringing all sides of the community together addressing the collective trauma through all disciplines of art. The future of Belfast is unclear in the muddy waters of Brexit. The Good Friday Agreement brought an end to the fighting—it was a gift of peace to our children and hopefully it will remain respected by Brexit to also be a gift to our children’s children. Hopefully Belfast will keep striding forward as a great example of how a city can regenerate and emerge from conflict through the healing power of art.”

**From a Catholic priest living now in Belfast (p. 149):**

“... Religion, if we go back to the origins of the term, is about bringing people together. I strongly believe it is the responsibility of people of faith to overcome their own fears and step out of their comfort zone, in order to meet others and connect with them. I am a great believer in inter-faith dialogue and I think Churches, maybe more than all other organisations, need to work together and get involved in the healing of our traumatised community. People here desperately need leadership, whether from political or religious community leaders... Listening is crucial and so is action, because Northern Ireland still has its challenges—the fragility of our institutions, sporadic violence, sectarianism and the unresolved tension over Brexit, to name but a few. If we want to build a society based on justice, fairness and hope, rather than fear, entering a dialogue with people from all backgrounds is essential, without closing any door.”