Sectarianism in Northern Ireland: A Review

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INTRODUCTION

When the late Sir George Quigley retired from banking in 2001, the Ulster Bank set aside a sum of money in the form of a Fund under his name for promoting social wellbeing. This proved very successful in providing support for a wide range of community-based social projects throughout the island of Ireland. More recently, it has been suggested that the Fund should sponsor research into the adverse consequences of sectarianism on Northern Ireland economic and social life, and also into the feasibility of introducing measures to replace division and promote reconciliation between different sections of the community.

These were matters about which Sir George felt particularly strongly and had in fact recommended should be placed at the top of the public agenda alongside the economy. The Fund has agreed to undertake the sponsorship, and this Review is the result.

21 years after the Good Friday Agreement, latent sectarianism persists in Northern Ireland, despite strenuous and continuing efforts on the part of government, voluntary organisations and others to deal with its many manifestations. Although often triggered by events, it can erupt at any time, produce dire and adverse consequences, and hinder the steady growth of reconciliation. It is highly damaging to the image we present to the outside world – a very important consideration in the promotion of Northern Ireland as a base for inward investment. We now have to ask if the capability exists to provide solutions to these problems or whether we must simply hope that with the passage of time they will somehow just go away.

Since 1998, a great deal of research by academics has been devoted to exploring particular aspects of the sectarian issue, but so far the question of how to deal effectively with basic sectarian prejudice and hostility as opposed to its many effects, has been left to one side.

This Review is intended as a new ground-breaking step, facing up squarely to this major problem confronting our society, and suggesting best possible means, in light of present knowledge and experience for bringing about attitudinal change. This Review has been prepared by Professor Duncan Morrow of Ulster University in conjunction with the members of the Sir George Quigley Fund Committee.

Research into the adverse consequences of sectarianism on Northern Ireland economic and social life, and also into the feasibility of introducing measures to replace division and promote reconciliation between different sections of the community.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The **Terms of Reference** agreed for this Review were as follows:

To understand and identify the continuing and changing nature of sectarianism in Northern Ireland, its extremely negative impact on economic, social and cultural life, together with opportunities for its replacement by a concerted process of reconciliation throughout society.

'Reconciliation' is understood as meaning a general willingness on the part of people throughout the community to tolerate and respect the rights of other law-abiding people to hold views at variance from those which they hold themselves.

PREFACE

The Aim of this Review

Over recent years, there has been continuing and renewed evidence that sectarian divisions continue to have adverse effects on political and social relationships throughout our community. Separation in residence and schooling has not radically changed in 20 years. The political institutions have shown continuing signs of instability and cultural issues have given rise to open divisions.

This Review is written in an effort to come to terms with the phenomenon of 'sectarian divisiveness' as it exists here today, yet in a spirit of hope and creativity. Above all, it is designed to move past simply 'understanding the problem' and instead to suggest positive and practical means whereby real progress might be made in bringing the issue of sectarianism here to successful resolution through reconciliation.

This Review is divided into three Parts. Part One is a short introduction to the concept of sectarianism as it has evolved over past centuries. Part Two presents statistical and other information through which we try to identify ongoing issues of division, and the progress towards peace that has been achieved. Part Three examines and assesses evidence presented, including views expressed in the course of extremely valuable Focus Group Workshops, and puts forward suggestions whereby progress might be made through commitment by the whole of society to addressing the sectarian legacy, in pursuit of reconciliation and a better future for all.

The purpose of the Review therefore is to seek opportunities for change towards a much less divided society, where partnership and collaboration are normal and friendship is routine. The proposals are intended in a constructive spirit: to provoke thought and further ideas, rather than to limit or constrain further development. The hope is that this can be the stimulus for evolution across our entire community of a new energy and drive in the search for a more peaceful future.

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PART ONE:

Sectarianism in Northern Ireland:
A brief introduction to a contested concept

The word 'sectarianism' originally referred to small groups splitting away from, or acting in isolation from, 'the church'. The word 'catholic', meaning 'universal', referred to the whole community of the people, and 'sects' described groups separated from or organised in opposition to that whole. From this, the word 'sectarian' took on its dual meaning: it had something to do with religion and something to do with groups separated by hostility.

Relationships in the northern part of Ireland have been described over many centuries as 'sectarian'. In large part this stems from the wars of religion that broke out across Western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where the church split into those still loyal to the old order (Catholics) and a variety of independent challengers (Protestants). The resulting hostility, in which religious rituals, belonging and beliefs were seen to be in conflict, was not restricted to a narrow realm of 'faith', but shaped both politics and international relations and personal behaviour. It contributed directly to centuries of conflict and war. Often, the combination of politics and theology took on a 'dualistic' character, where each side defined their cause as a stand for good opposed to evident evil.

Within this broader context, the specific conditions of Ireland gave rise to particular outcomes. The wars of religion coincided with an age of expansion, as European explorers conquered new territories and reshaped the political and economic map of the world. The expansion of the new, militantly protestant, British state to include Ireland often took on a religious character, and the plantation settlement established in the northern part of the island after 1600 left a long legacy of antagonism rooted in a fusion of politics, religion and economics. Nowadays,

hostilities would tend to focus on political rather than religious differences, although the historic association between religion and politics remains strong enough for religious terminology to be used for political, national and ideological divisions in everyday speech.

Sectarian division was in both the foreground and background of the politics that led to partition and shaped devolution and politics in devolved Northern Ireland after 1921. The possibility of violence reinforced community divisions along sectarian lines and political experience, as well as access to power and resources, was shaped by those divisions. Although the civil rights movement initially drew in supporters from across the community, the descent into open and violent conflict after 1968 resulted in even deeper divisions. Between 1971 and 1973, terrified minorities fled from the mixed, and largely working-class districts of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. Armed groups rooted in separated communities and territories dominated the political landscape Belfast in particular, and Northern Ireland as a whole, became an international byword for religious war between 'Protestants' and 'Catholics' and civil violence.

Many people, both secular and church-going, are suspicious of the word 'sectarian', for fear that it over-emphasises the religious dimension of conflict rather than the political and economic elements. In this document, the word is used, with all of its uncertainties, to describe an inter-group struggle for power, in which both religion and politics have played a consistent part, and which is widely used to describe the wider division. What is consistent is the hostility: what may have changed over the years is the precise role of faith and doctrine.

It is important to note, however, that, as is the case with religion, sectarianism cannot be restricted to a specific text or set of beliefs. In Northern Ireland, hostility has shaped:

- *Identity,* where belonging is often also tied to 'not being them', as well as deep memories of injury and struggle in one part of the community against an external other;

- *Structure,* including the divided structure of political life, the structure of cultural and sporting life, education and expectations of marriage and family;

- *Behaviour,* where long years of experience convince people that they must be wary about where they live, where they go, how they speak in public and what they wear; and,

- *Attitudes,* in which life is inevitably viewed through the lens of separated and often hostile experience.

'Sectarianism' is therefore a part of both the historic legacy and of the everyday. After so many years, our understanding of each other, and our knowledge of each other too often relies on received or second-hand knowledge or presumptions shaped by trauma. Pre-judgement, or prejudice, thrives in a climate of fear. Friendships, of which there are many, usually thrive in spite of sectarianism, and often survive on the basis of tacitly avoiding giving offence or discussing divisive issues.

The attention paid to 'sectarianism' in this paper, is not intended to be judgemental or pejorative, but to describe a common predicament: we were raised in a society where sectarianism was 'built in' to normality. Although the term sectarian is widely used,

it is a word without positive associations. It is therefore, in true sectarian fashion, usually a word which we resist when applied to ourselves and rest more easily when it is applied at a level of generality, or to others. But it is perfectly possible, indeed likely, that attitudes, behaviours or presumptions that we take to be unproblematic or 'normal' are regarded as 'sectarian' by others.

Escaping this bind is part of the purpose of this Review. Efforts to change the hostility and suspicion and the permission it has sometimes given for violence, discrimination and exclusion therefore challenge assumptions and habits which are so deeply rooted that they are taken for granted as 'normal'. It is therefore both a huge challenge, to which there is understandable resistance, and a necessity, if peace is ever to become the norm.

Seeking Peace in Northern Ireland

Violent conflict in Northern Ireland after 1969 claimed over 3,000 lives and injured tens of thousands of others. Communities separated on territorial, educational and cultural lines and the political institutions of devolution were abandoned in 1972. After many efforts, the British and Irish governments signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985 and embarked, haltingly, on a joint project for 'reconciliation' across the traditional division, now often called the 'peace process'. In 1994, the major loyalist and republican armed groups called ceasefires, and their political representatives entered direct negotiations with the governments and other parties. Financial and diplomatic support for the process came from both the European Union and the USA.

After four years of progress and setbacks, negotiations chaired by Senator George Mitchell produced the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998. Although

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rejected by the Democratic Unionists, the Agreement was approved in a referendum by 71% of Northern Irish voters, and overwhelmingly in the Irish Republic. The first three paragraphs of the Agreement set out its anti-sectarian and historic purposes:

1. We, the participants in the multi-party negotiations, believe that the agreement we have negotiated offers a truly historic opportunity for a new beginning.

2. The tragedies of the past have left a deep and profoundly regrettable legacy of suffering. We must never forget those who have died or been injured, and their families. But we can best honour them through a fresh start, in which we firmly dedicate ourselves to the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust, and to the protection and vindication of the human rights of all.

3. We are committed to partnership, equality and mutual respect as the basis of relationships within Northern Ireland, between North and South, and between these islands.

Suspicion and caution in Northern Ireland would not disappear easily, however. For nine years after the signing of the Agreement, serious disagreements, especially over paramilitary disarmament, made it impossible to establish political institutions on a stable basis. At the same time, reconciliation in society began to take root, with a reduction in the level of inter-community violence, especially after 2001, and widespread initiatives and efforts at community level. For the first time, immigration seemed to be changing the 'dual antagonism' of Northern Ireland society. And in 2005, the British government produced its 'Shared Future' policy, declaring that "'separate but

equal' is not an option." When devolution was restored in 2007, the parties leading the new Executive were Sinn Féin and the DUP, both of which had previously been defined by their deep polarisation. Above all, they represented voters who were characterised by deeply felt differences in national identity, religious background and attitudes to and experience of conflict in Northern Ireland.

Nonetheless, the Executive established in 2007 proved to have greater staying power than anything in Northern Ireland since 1972. The advent of devolution established politics as the primary public arena for the working out of peace, including addressing the deep sectarianism embedded in society. In symbolic terms, the new First and Deputy First Ministers, acting together in Northern Ireland, became global icons of peace. Economic conditions, especially after the global financial crash in 2008-9, were challenging. However, political violence had reduced to levels unimaginable in the 1980s, and, in 2010, policing and justice were devolved to the new Executive. Much had clearly changed, with hugely beneficial consequences for the quality of life of the majority in Northern Ireland.

What remained, inevitably, was the legacy of violence and the deeply-rooted patterns of sectarianism. Separation remained a basic fact of life in many areas, and paramilitarism proved difficult to erode. Issues of identity or challenges to existing structures both held the possibility that they would reignite fears or reopen wounds. Underneath the visibly melting tip of the iceberg, a still-challenging mass remained to be addressed. So when the Executive collapsed in 2016 many of the old divisions, especially in politics, reappeared running the risk that this could spill into communities.

PART TWO:

Sectarianism:
Background to the
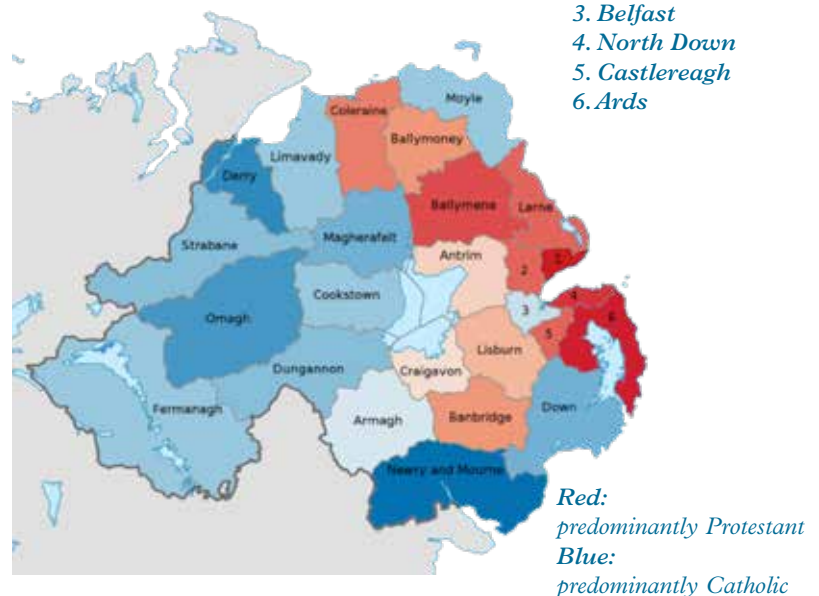# current context

1. Changing Demographics

The 2011 census was a demographic watershed in Northern Ireland. In 2011, 45% of Northern Ireland's population were Catholic or brought up Catholic, 48% were Protestant or brought up Protestant or other Christian and 5.6% neither belonged to nor had been brought up in a religion. For the first time, the proportion of the population declaring themselves as Protestant, or having been brought up as Protestant, fell below 50%, even after a statistical adjustment for those who initially stated they had no religion. The highest proportions stating that they neither belonged to, nor had been brought up in, a religion, were found in the local government areas of North Down (12%), Carrickfergus (10%) and Ards (9.4%). Although the census also recorded a significant rise in the number of people declaring a non-Christian religion, that overall figure remained at less than 1%.

There is no direct correlation between religion and religious traditional and national identity in Northern Ireland. However, the historic associations, and evidence of close correlation in attitudes within religiously defined groups, are very strong. Northern Ireland as a distinct political entity emerged after a forty-year campaign to defy proposals for Home Rule for Ireland. Unionist opponents of Home Rule famously objected that 'Home Rule is Rome Rule'. In a society characterised by debates over 'majority rule', where consent by a majority underpins the legitimacy of the state, the absence of a religious majority is an important symbolic marker. Certainly, the census suggests that returning to governing Northern Ireland without inter-community partnership will be increasingly difficult.

Further analysis of the census reveals additional important dynamics. The geographical distribution of religious affiliation indicates that only Antrim and Down of the original six counties of Northern Ireland now have significant Protestant majorities. Only Lisburn of the five official cities in Northern Ireland has a Protestant majority. Within a decade, Belfast will almost certainly have a Catholic majority. In effect, a 'majority Protestant Ireland' is now restricted to the suburban area surrounding Belfast. Based on the pre-2015 old local government boundaries, 13 of the District Council areas had Protestant majorities and 13 had Catholic majorities.

Figure 1:
Religion by District Council Area
Source: Census 2011

1. Carrickfergus
2. Newtownabbey
3. Belfast
4. North Down
5. Castlereagh
6. Ards

Red:
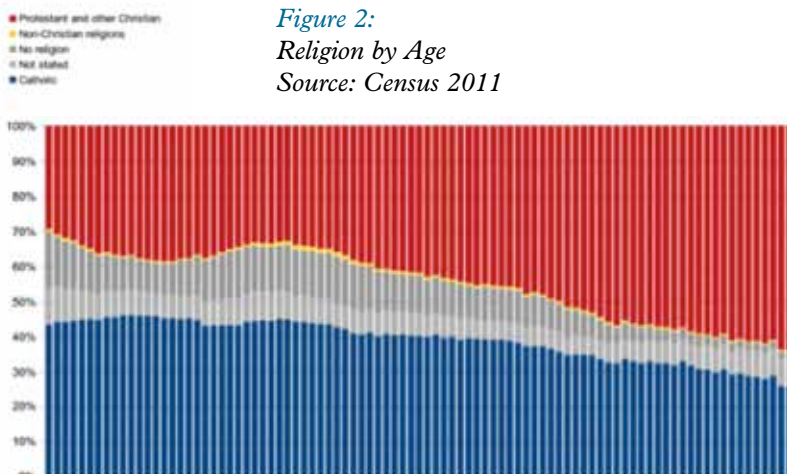*predominantly Protestant*
Blue:
predominantly Catholic

Translated into the new local government boundaries, there are four with clear Protestant majorities, all in the Belfast suburbs (Ards and North Down, Antrim and Newtownabbey, Lisburn and Castlereagh, and Mid and East Antrim), four with clear Catholic majorities, all of which are immediately beside the border

(Derry City and Strabane, Omagh and Fermanagh, Mid Ulster, and Newry, Mourne and Down) and three where majorities are less clear cut (Causeway Coast and Glens, Belfast, and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon). However, between 2001 and 2011, the numbers of Protestants as a proportion of the population fell in every one of the 26 District Councils of Northern Ireland, whereas the Catholic proportion rose in 19 of the 26 Councils.

Analysis of the age structure of the 2011 census suggests that the trend away from a Protestant majority is likely to continue. The Protestant majority was clear among people over 60, but is not evident among those under 40. Furthermore, among the under 20s there is strong growth among those stating no religion and a greater number of Catholics than Protestants. Among Protestants, 40% are aged under 35, whereas 51% are under 35 among Catholics and 54% among those with no religion (http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/census2011analysis/religion/religionCommentary.pdf).

Figure 2:

Religion by Age
Source: Census 2011

The census confirmed a trend already evident in other statistics. Work by Ian Shuttleworth and Stefanie Doebler (http://calls.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Filetoupload483256en.pdf) indicated that the main driver of change in the numbers and proportions of Catholics and Protestants was:

- differential rates of births and deaths;
- migration; and
- loss of religious affiliation.

They also suggested that religious identities were more constant in rural areas but more liable to change in urban areas and in the East. In the school year 2006-7, 'declared Catholics' made up slightly more than 50% of school children in Northern Ireland, while 'declared Protestants' numbered just 39.5% (down from 42.7% in 2000-1). In 2006, 52% of Northern Ireland's 5,813 religious marriages were Catholic, 20% Presbyterian, 16% Church of Ireland, 4% Methodist and 8% other Christian denominations.

Both Queen's University and Ulster University had a majority of students from a Catholic background, while a study for the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in 2013 found that 63% of those who chose to study in Great Britain did not return to Northern Ireland after study, which other studies suggested was disproportionately Protestant (http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/EducationalMigrationinNIreland2008.pdf).

In 2010, the Irish Academy of Engineering published a report addressing the infrastructure needs for an island anticipating a population of eight million people by 2030. Since then, many anticipate that by 2050 there might be up to ten million people on the
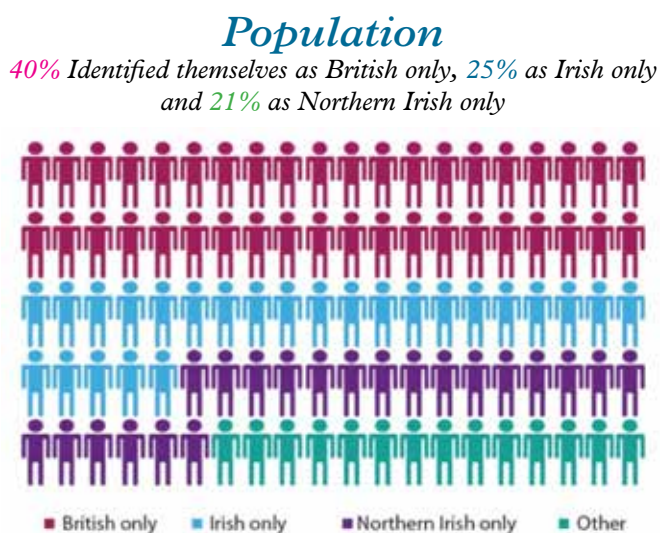
island of Ireland (with an estimate of seven million people in the Republic of Ireland). Preparation for this population growth is now influencing many aspects of public policy making in the Republic of Ireland. Other data also shows a changed pattern in migration in Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2009, when there was an unprecedented rise in the number of people immigrating into Northern Ireland, mostly from Eastern Europe - although this trend has not continued since 2016 (https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/long-term-international-migration-statistics-northern-ireland-2015-charts).

In the most recent NISRA population projections, released in October 2017, it is estimated that the number of people aged 65 and over in Northern Ireland will rise from nearly 300,000 people to almost half a million by 2041. This marked increase over the next 25 years, coupled with the projected reduction in the number of children, will see the number of people aged 65 and over exceeding the number of children from mid-2028 onwards and the ratio of those aged 65 and over to those aged 16 to 64 increasing from 25% to 43%. These changes have major consequences for both the economy and society of Northern Ireland. To ameliorate these demographic trends, attracting more people of working age to our shores will become more important in the coming two decades. Many now suggest that a significant influx of a young working population may be a necessary antidote to the ageing demographics of Northern Ireland's existing population.

Translating statistics about religious background into clear consequences for politics and national identity is never straightforward. It is evident from the data over many years (Life and Times, Census) that very few Protestants consider themselves
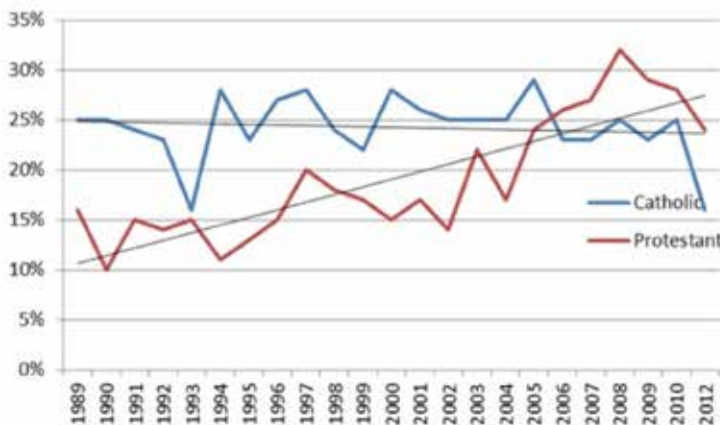
to have an Irish national identity and that the vast majority of those who call themselves Irish also identify as Catholic (94% according to the census). However, the 2011 census also revealed a significant growth in the number of people calling themselves 'Northern Irish' as a distinct identity, reflecting a drop in the proportion of people identifying themselves as exclusively Irish (http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/census2011analysis/nationalidentity/index.aspx).

Figure 3:
National Identity
Source: Census 2011

Population
40% Identified themselves as British only, 25% as Irish only and 21% as Northern Irish only

■ British only   ■ Irish only   ■ Northern Irish only   ■ Other

Further analysis suggested that Northern Irish identity was shared to a significant degree across the population. What is not yet clear is the extent to which 'Northern Irish' is a stable or shared category. Analysis of data in the Life and Times survey suggested that this choice was already in decline by 2013, especially among Catholics (https://sluggerotoole.com/2014/01/16/why-northern-ireland-is-becoming-less-northern-irish-and-more-divided/).

Percentage identifying as Northern Irish
Source: Life and Times Survey

Electoral data from 2016 and 2017 (see below) suggests that the correlation between religion, national identity and political choices remains polarised and liable to polarisation in times of contention. This potential for disruption as a result of increased inter-community competition is particularly evident in areas around interfaces in Belfast. The communities that have developed in proximity to these barriers are among the most deprived in Northern Ireland.

Some 86% of the population resident within 400 metres of any so-called 'peace-wall' are in the lowest quintile (20%) of the population of Greater Belfast, as measured by the Multiple Deprivation Index. While evidence suggests that all districts share in multiple deprivation, data shows that there are distinct differences in the profiles of Protestant and Catholic districts in proximity to 'peace-walls' in Belfast. In general, the population density and age profile of populations in Catholic areas

show a younger population living in closer proximity to physical structures:

- Across Belfast, 65% of the population living within 100 metres of a 'peace-wall' were Catholic and 27% were Protestant;
- Within 100 metres of a 'peace-wall', there are three times as many Catholic children between 0-4 as Protestant children. The ratio at this age group falls to 2:1 between 100 and 400 metres of a 'peace-wall';
- Only at age 60 and above, between 300 and 400 metres of a 'peace-wall' are there more Protestants than Catholics.

Catholic communities that are younger and poorer may experience restrictions on space and/or availability of resources including housing and open space. Meanwhile older Protestant communities, which are losing residents, may experience a sense of community decline, dereliction and abandonment. The wall itself, and community antagonism, prevents these issues being addressed through normal market mechanisms, whereby those requiring housing can access land where it is available, and abandonment is reversed through the influx of new and younger populations.

Consequences and Conclusions

a. There is a clear statistical trend towards a change in the religious minority-majority structure of Northern Ireland. On a strict analysis of identity, there is no longer a Protestant majority in Northern Ireland.

b. There is a measurable trend towards a Catholic majority within Northern Ireland. The extent to which this translates into choices about national

identity is uncertain. Following the Agreement there was consistent evidence in the Life and Times surveys that a relatively high proportion of Catholics were content to remain in the United Kingdom in the medium term. However, there is also evidence that the changes in population are having significant effects in the politics of Northern Ireland (see below) and that identity can be sharply affected by political events.

c.   The opportunities and challenges of living in a plural society are likely to grow in coming decades, as this issue changes its nature. Planning for a shared society with a significant new population is an important part of preparing for the future.

d.   The changes in the city of Belfast are striking. The traditional image of Belfast as a politically unionist city has been changing for many years. Under the new local government boundaries established in 2016, Belfast has become a shared city, where the Catholic population is younger and more confident. This is particularly true in areas close to interfaces, where there are persistent concentrations of poverty and contentious cultural issues. Paramilitary organisations appear to have an ongoing presence and there is evident competition over control of specific areas. In the context of the population dynamic outlined above, the narrative of 'two sides of a wall' may soon change into a narrative about growing and declining communities with different demands and real social impact. Anger and alienation among young loyalists has already resulted in political protests and street demonstrations. Issues of cultural identity, such as flags and emblems and

the routes of traditional parades have both become contentious in recent years.

e.   The cumulative effect of demographic changes is experienced differently in 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' communities, especially where they are separately organised and still perceived as hostile, as is the case at interfaces. This 'asymmetric dynamic' has an important impact on politics and the dilemmas facing politicians, which is likely to accelerate in coming years. Unionist politics often reflect the perception that Protestant neighbourhoods face:

   •   A reduction in the physical area of territorial control;
   •   A potentially expanding restriction of their area for community celebration (eg parades, flags and emblems);
   •   Perception of growth in influence of feared enemies – 'republicans', 'dissidents'; and
   •   Cultural pessimism – loss, dying out, things are getting worse.

Nationalist politics appears to be more optimistic about future prospects. In the absence of fears of further cultural loss, concerns about unequal access to social goods predominate. Instead Nationalist narratives tend to be characterised by:

   •   Concerns about housing issues, including overcrowding and multiple deprivation, rooted in unequal access to space, housing and other amenities;
   •   Any continuing evidence of residual discrimination, especially where equality demands are deemed to have been set aside.

Planning for a shared society with a significant new population is an important part of preparing for the future.

2. Changing Political Context

Writing in 2012, Paul Nolan summarised his assessment of the underlying stability of the peace process in Northern Ireland in two startling and encouraging conclusions: the political institutions are secure, and the level of violence is down. His conclusion on the political system rested on a considerable body of empirical evidence which, taken as a whole, indeed suggested significant progress:

"All main political parties are now prepared to work within an agreed political framework. The main features are: an Assembly where power is shared through an all-party coalition, an Irish dimension with functioning institutions, acceptance of the consent principle, adherence to equality and human rights, and an underwriting of the whole package by the British and Irish governments... Attitudinal evidence from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey shows that the existing arrangement is the preference of the majority of respondents, not just as a temporary solution but as a long-term policy." (Nolan, 2012, p7)

The Life and Times Attitudes Survey seemed to support all of these conclusions: support for sharing in workplaces, housing and education remained high; the perception of safety in public space was improving; and the numbers willing to look for jobs across the whole labour market were growing. There was evidence in both Protestant and Catholic communities of increasing optimism that 'things would get better' over the next five years (Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, 2012).

But, in retrospect, 2012 seems to have represented a high-water mark for optimism. On 03 December of the same year, Belfast City Council voted to limit the days that the Union Flag flies from Belfast City Hall to the 'designated days' set out by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport for Royal buildings and adopted by Stormont to guide its flag-flying policy. On the night of the vote, loyalist protesters attempted to storm Belfast City Hall. Throughout December and January 2013, street protests were held almost daily, some of which led to serious clashes between local people and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Evidence of alienation among loyalists was, however, matched by complaints from others that the police had not been resolute in their response.

In the intervening seven years, Northern Ireland has appeared to be caught ambiguously between two contrasting narratives of 'progress against the past' and continued antagonism. While relationships between the governing parties soured over street riots and flags, the power-sharing system did not collapse. Fermanagh was the venue for the G8 summit of the world's most powerful leaders on the basis that it provided a peaceful and secure venue for contentious talks. After years of hesitation, the imminent arrival of world leaders led Sinn Féin and the DUP to launch a new framework for addressing chronic division, launched as 'Together: Building a United Community" (T:BUC) in May 2013. Although criticised by other parties, the strategy boldly asserted that, "Peace is now firmly established with stable political structures that are delivering for local people."(T:BUC :https://www.executiveofficeni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/ofmdfm_dev/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf, p1) and made significant commitments to change: that all interface barriers would be removed within 10 years and all-party talks would seek resolution on the chronically insoluble issues of "Parades, Flags and Emblems and the Past".

Yet despite the engagement of senior US negotiators Richard Haass and Megan O'Sullivan, the negotiations culminating at Christmas 2013 ultimately proved unsuccessful. Furthermore, Northern Ireland constitutional politics were increasingly interacting with the difficult everyday policy choices of government. While the routes of parades became an issue in North Belfast once again, efforts by the Conservative government to alter social security spending in the context of austerity (Welfare Reform) faltered in the face of Sinn Féin opposition and refusal to vote for change in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

A further set of crunch talks, this time involving both governments, produced the Stormont House Agreement before Christmas in 2014. Once again however, there was little substantive agreement on either cultural issues or approaches to the past. Indeed, issues of the past, and decisions taken without publicity in 2007 about prisoners widely referred to as 'on the runs' (OTRs), threatened to undermine agreement again. When a feud within republican circles led the PSNI to accuse the IRA of participation in a shooting in August 2015, a further set of talks was convened by the governments. Without intentional irony, the deal at Christmas was entitled 'Fresh Start', echoing the Good Friday Agreement: "We must never forget those who have died or been injured, and their families. But we can best honour them through a fresh start."

The Fresh Start Agreement of 2015 was effectively negotiated between the governments and the two largest parties in Northern Ireland. Increasingly, the axis of devolution seemed to run between Sinn Féin and the DUP, rather than between the five parties. Perhaps the most significant element was

agreement to establish a broadly based Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition (FICT), which was due to report in early 2018.

When the DUP and Sinn Féin emerged from the May 2016 election as the dominant partners, there were real hopes that the new deal, with its promises to address the residual presence of paramilitary organisations in communities, would indeed allow for fuller co-operation between the signatories. The three other Executive parties now entered opposition, and the Justice Ministry was taken by an independent Unionist.

But hopes for greater coherence and clearer decision making were almost immediately complicated by events. The referendum on the UK's membership of the EU in June 2016 took place in comparative quiet. A DUP campaign in favour of leaving was opposed by other parties, but there was very little discussion of the specific consequences for Northern Ireland. Turnout on the day was the lowest in the UK, especially in areas with strong Sinn Féin support.

Despite the apparent indifference of the campaign, the result itself caused significant change. Analysis of the results showed a startling geographical correlation between national identity, religious affiliation and the outcome of the referendum, and inevitable potential for contentious division along traditional lines. With the issue of a border separating Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland back on the table, the Executive had no obvious capacity to provide a coherent 'Northern Ireland' position. The British and Irish governments were now opposing sides to a negotiation again, rather than co-sponsors and partners.

Table 1:

The Brexit Referendum 2016: Results in Northern Ireland by constituency

Constituency	Referendum Turnout	Remain	Leave
Belfast South	69.5	69.5	30.5
Fermanagh S. Tyrone	67.9	58.6	41.4
North Down	67.7	52.4	47.6
Lagan Valley	66.6	46.9	53.1
Belfast East	66.5	48.6	51.4
Antrim East	65.2	44.8	55.2
Antrim North	64.9	37.8	62.2
Strangford	64.5	44.5	55.5
Upper Bann	63.8	47.4	52.6
Newry Armagh	63.7	62.9	37.1
Antrim South	63.4	49.4	50.6
NI	62.7	55.8	44.2
South Down	62.4	67.2	32.8
West Tyrone	61.8	66.8	33.2
Mid Ulster	60.4	60.4	39.6
L'derry East	59.9	52	48
Belfast North	57.7	50.4	49.6
Foyle	57.4	78.3	21.7
Belfast West	48.9	74.1	25.9

Figure 5:
The Brexit Referendum Result in Northern Ireland
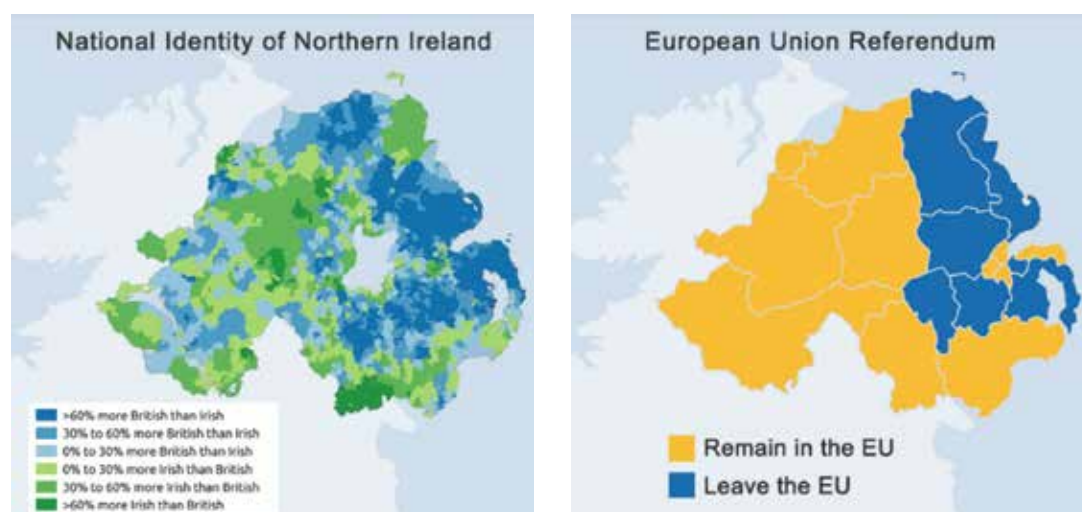
In the event, the internal partnership of the DUP and Sinn Féin was brought to an end amidst allegations of mismanagement and possible corruption in a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI). Within weeks, a question of finance and ministerial responsibility had spiralled into a stand-off over language rights and divergent approaches to the RHI scandal between the Executive parties. When the Deputy First Minister, now deceased, withdrew from the Executive, the stage was set for March elections and more talks. The elections polarised along the lines of traditional divisions, producing a minor political earthquake, when Unionists lost their overall majority and Sinn Féin came within one seat of being the largest party in the Assembly.

An unmistakable, if still uneven, historic trend was visible. In 1969, unionism claimed some 66% of the vote. By the 1980s, the consistent Unionist majority had slipped into the 'high 50s', and slightly above 50% by the 1990s. In 1997, it fell to less than half for the first time. In the Assembly election of 2017, the combined Unionist vote (DUP+UUP+TUV+PUP) was 44.3%.

Table 2:
NI Assembly Election Results 2017: Results by Party

	Political Party	Seats	Change from 2016	Change from national	First Preference votes	First Pref. %	Change from 2016
	DUP	28	-10	-5	225,413	28.1%	-1.1%
	Sinn Féin	27	-1	+4	224,245	27.9%	+3.9%
	SDLP	12	-3	+1	95,958	11.9%	-0.1%
	UUP	10	-6	-1	103,314	12.9%	+0.3%
	Alliance	8	0	+2	72,717	9.1%	+2.1%
	Green (NI)	2	0	0	18,527	2.3%	-0.4%
	TUV	1	0	0	20,523	2.6%	-0.9%
	PBP	1	-1	0	14,100	1.8%	-0.2%
	PUP	0	0	0	5,590	0.7%	-0.2%
	Ind.	1	0	+1	14,407	1.8%	-1.5%

Within weeks of the Assembly election, where there was no progress in talks, the Prime Minister unexpectedly called a General Election, which she was widely expected to win. Without the protection of Proportional Representation, the election in Northern Ireland polarised voters into two camps. Perhaps reacting to Sinn Fein's success in March, Unionist voters turned out in greater numbers, resulting in an increase in the DUP's vote of 65,000 in three months. About half of this appeared to come from other Unionist parties who saw their vote decline sharply. While the DUP increased their number of seats to 10, and Sinn Fein improved to 7, the SDLP and Ulster Unionists lost all of their seats.

Table 3:
UK General Elections 2017: Results in Northern Ireland by Party

Political Party	Votes	Seats Won	Change	Vote share
DUP	292,316	10	+2	+10.3%
Sinn Féin	238,915	7	+3	+4.9%
SDLP	95,419	0	-3	-2.2%
UUP	83,280	0	-2	-5.8%
APNI	64,553	0	0	-0.6%
Independent Unionist	16,148	1	2.3%	
Green (NI)	7,452	0	0	
People Before Profit	5,509	0	0	
NI Conservatives	3,895	0	0	
TUV	3,282	0	0	

The outcome of the election meant that the DUP had become pivotal to the Conservative majority at Westminster, while Sinn Féin's priority seemed to have moved to opportunities to enter government in Dublin.

By the summer of 2017, all aspects of the settlement which seemed to Paul Nolan to be bedding down in 2012, now appeared to be in question: the future of the Assembly was unclear, and the five-party coalition no longer existed, the Irish dimension was similarly suspended and issues of equality and rights had once again come to shape the political landscape.

Political relationships in Northern Ireland deteriorated further after the election. In October 2017, the lack of progress in talks forced the Secretary of State to introduce a budget for Northern Ireland at Westminster. In February 2018, talks to re-establish the Assembly collapsed in acrimony when the DUP refused to agree to any Irish Language Act. By the end of 2018, Northern Ireland had had no devolved government for two years.

Replacing devolved government had become equally fraught however. Northern Ireland, and the status of the border had become pivotal to the entire negotiations on UK withdrawal from the EU. Although the majority in Northern Ireland had voted to remain, the DUP's strong position at Westminster gave them important leverage there. The party's stated priority was to ensure that the Brexit settlement did not create special arrangements which would distance Northern Ireland from the UK. The Irish government, on the other hand,

persuaded the EU to support their position that there could be no withdrawal agreement without guarantees of an open trading border in Ireland. For the first time in decades, the question of the border and the prospect of a United Ireland were openly discussed in politics and the media. While many people warned of the risks of conflating Brexit with the border issue, there was considerable evidence that the debate about the European Union had polarised political opinion on the issue in a way not seen since before 1985. All of a sudden, demographic and political factors seemed to be converging in an unexpected way.

The unexpected turn of events restricted the room of the British and Irish governments to act in Northern Ireland, as both were seen as aligned to one party or another. The final element undermining confidence in government was evidence emerging in the judicial inquiry into the Renewable Heating Incentive (RHI) of serious malpractice at ministerial, party and civil service levels. While this had no immediate effect, it added to the general sense of malaise around government in Northern Ireland, especially the absence of accountability within a mandatory coalition system.

By the end of 2018, the only solution appeared to be to reinforce Civil Service powers to take decisions, despite real concerns that this lacked democratic accountability.

Despite political uncertainty, there was little evidence of any popular appetite for a return to violence. But beyond the failure of talks in Belfast, the new and unpredictable factor was the widening gulf emerging between the

UK and Ireland over the future status and management of the Irish border following Brexit. While negotiations continued at diplomatic level, the potential for these differences to weaken the crucial partnership underpinning stability within Northern Ireland was dominating politics. As the twenty-first anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement approached, there was clear evidence of significant anxiety about its future and about what might follow its demise.

Consequences and Conclusions

1. A combination of events, including disagreements between the lead parties over socioeconomic policy, mistrust over cultural issues and external events - in particular the debate over Brexit - appeared to have undermined the direction established in the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent trust within devolved government since 2007. There is significant evidence that each party holds the other responsible for the absence of co-operative spirit.

2. The results of the two elections in 2017 suggest that identity issues continue to have the capacity to polarise the electorate. Predictions that 'bread and butter' issues would supersede nationalism as the dividing issue in politics have proved premature or misplaced. The demographic and political changes underlying events in Northern Ireland suggest that the battle to be the largest party may continue in coming elections. As the numbers of Catholics and Protestant become more equal, the potential for this to crystallise into political antagonism could grow unless there is consistent political partnership, clear and plausible commitment to sharing the future and a spirit of generosity in relation to past hurts.

3. In recent decades, the primary pressure maintaining support for alternatives to 'single identity' solutions in Northern Ireland, including reconciliation, came from outside. Since at least 1985, the British and Irish governments have supported partnership, drawing also on European, Commonwealth and US support for accommodation and compromise. Within Northern Ireland, this has, at times, been regarded with suspicion by elements of both nationalism and unionism. Since 2012, presumptions about external consensus have radically changed.

Instead, constitutional uncertainty within Northern Ireland has often had its origins outside. Specifically, the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 heightened the question of national cohesion within the UK. The UK's decision through referendum in 2016 to leave the European Union has created enormous pressures in British-Irish relationships, leading to tensions over control of both immigration and trade and enormous uncertainty over the nature of the Irish border. Finally, the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2016 has resulted in a renewed focus in the US on domestic issues. The capacity of the international community to act to prevent sectarian polarisation may therefore have weakened, making co-operation within Northern Ireland increasingly vital.

With the outcome of Brexit discussions still unclear, together with the absence of devolved government, uncertainty and frustration were evident in many quarters. Until now, however, this has not been reflected in increased levels of violence.

3. Sharing and Separation

While the Executive is designed to ensure the participation of all parties in government, the principle of consociation focuses largely on mechanisms to ensure elite political co-operation between essentially separate, if not always hostile, communities. Whereas the underpinning purpose of the Belfast Agreement was defined as reconciliation, the mechanisms of politics both limit and channel co-operation along continuing unionist-nationalist lines. The St Andrews Agreement further reduced the element of co-operation and increased the potential for inter-community rivalry in relation to the position of First Minister. The unresolved question underlying the political arrangements is: are they designed to establish political co-operation at the cost of minimal inter-community engagement, or are they seen as a vehicle through which inter-community boundaries may be reduced? Put another way, are the Northern Ireland institutions intended to manage continued hostility and suspicion, or to reduce and eliminate them?

This problem was evident in the delays which accompanied agreement on an Executive strategy for community relations. Whereas international commentators continued to emphasise integrated education and desegregation (most publicly when New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg linked economic investment to the removal of all 'peace-walls' at an Investment Conference in May 2008) (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/7390938.stm), the Executive struggled to agree both the principles and practical content of a successor to the 'Shared Future' policy introduced by the British government in the last days of direct rule, which had declared that, "'separate but equal' is not an option".

Having distanced themselves from 'A Shared Future' in the first months of devolution, new Executive policy was only finalised in 2013 by the leading parties under the pressure of the arrival of the G8 Summit. While the headlines of the policy were ambitious, the credibility of the strategy has suffered since the collapse of the Haass-O'Sullivan Talks on Flags, Parades and the Past in 2013 and the difficulties in the Executive.

Separation in housing and in education and progress towards removing peace-walls in areas of high tension deserve the closest scrutiny. The most eye-catching commitment of the T:BUC strategy was to remove all 'peace-walls' by 2023. Although the Department of Justice has convened an Inter-Agency Group to address the challenges, it is clear that there has been only limited progress towards the target to date. Furthermore, Public Attitudes surveys suggested that those living closest to walls were becoming more rather than less sceptical. Whereas an Ulster University survey in 2012 found 22% of residents wanted walls to remain and 58% wanted them down immediately or in the future, a follow up in 2015 found that 30% of those surveyed wanted the walls to remain, while only 49% wanted them taken down. Notably, many more Protestants (44%) wanted the walls to remain the same, compared to only 23% of Catholic residents.

Segregated living also has a long pedigree in Northern Ireland. Above all, the flight of up to 15,000 people in Greater Belfast in the 1970s reinforced the ingrained pattern of separate living, particularly in areas of social housing. Under the T:BUC policy, the Executive encouraged the development of a number of pilot projects in shared neighbourhoods.

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However, the issue of intimidation and the difficulty of protecting minorities against threat hit the press again in October 2017, when a number of Catholic families were forced from a shared housing scheme in East Belfast, having been informed by the PSNI of a direct sectarian threat against them.

Analysis of the 2001 census data by Shuttleworth and Lloyd (2007) of Queen's University showed that 91% of Housing Executive estates in Belfast were highly polarised. In 2009 they also found that, outside Belfast, between a third and a half of people and households lived in estates that could be considered as 'highly polarised' (ECNI Key Inequalities in Housing and Communities, March 2016, p15).

Analysis of the 2011 census suggests a decline in the proportion of electoral wards where more than 80% of one religion has reduced, from 55% to 37%. However, it is very clear that the underlying reason for this has been the growth and spread in the Catholic population. The evidence comes from this and a number of sources. There has been a change in 28 wards across Northern Ireland to a Catholic majority, with none going the other way. In 2011, there were 61 wards that were at least 90% Catholic, yet only two Protestant wards with the same proportions.

Some of the biggest shifts have taken place in Belfast. Seven of the wards with the steepest relative decline in the proportion of Protestants are in Belfast, with five in East Belfast specifically. In some cases, the increase has come as a result of new immigrants into Northern Ireland moving into vacant housing in inner-city areas.

Table 4:
Wards with the largest Protestant decrease, 2001-2011. Source: Census 2011

	2010	2011			
	Protestant	Protestant	Catholic	Other	Protestant decline (% points)
Duncairn	90.2	63.9	23.6	12.6	-26.4
Coolhill	75.7	51.7	41.2	7	-24.0
Woodstock	86.7	63.3	19.4	17.3	-23.4
The Mount	89.7	68.3	16.1	15.6	-21.4
Parklake	60.7	39.6	54.1	6.2	-21.1
Ravenhill	67.4	39.7	46.9	13.5	-20.5
Blackstaff	91.4	71.5	15.0	13.5	-19.9
Island	89.5	69.8	13.9	16.3	-19.7
Bloomfield	87.6	69.7	16.1	14.9	-17.9
Church	93.8	76.0	14.0	9.9	-17.8

There is evidence that demographic integration is also happening in more prosperous areas, with a more confident and prosperous Catholic community moving into previously largely Protestant areas. Paul Nolan points out that by 2011 this had turned around so that Catholics made up the largest share of the population in six of the 20 most affluent areas of Northern Ireland, commenting: "For example, Wallace Park, which features as the most affluent area in the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service chart, had 16.7% Catholics in 2001 and in 2011 this had increased to 20.5%".

The arrival of new ethnic minorities shows Northern Ireland 'on a trajectory towards a more pluralist society' with 'significant opportunities for positive political and social change'.

Table 5:
Catholic social mobility in affluent wards.
Source: NI Peace Monitor
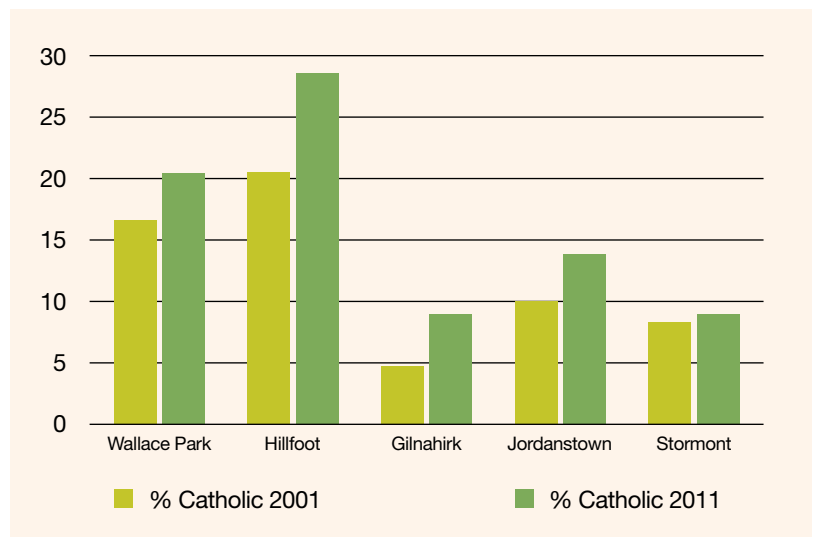
This raises a number of complex but important questions. As Paul Nolan points out "wards that appear mixed overall can still be self-segregating at street level." (Nolan, 2014, p114) To some extent, statistical desegregation as a result of demographic change is experienced as systematic decline within the Protestant community and is associated with acute cultural anxiety rather than 'celebrating diversity'. Most of the movement of population is taking up vacancies rather than displacing Protestant residents. Shuttleworth and Lloyd are more optimistic, suggesting in 2013 that the arrival of new ethnic minorities shows Northern Ireland 'on a trajectory towards a more pluralist society' with 'significant opportunities for positive political and social change' (Shuttleworth and Lloyd, 2013: 64).

The Good Friday Agreement contained a commitment to support both integrated education and shared neighbourhoods. The evidence of recent years is that commitment to integrated education has been set aside through a combination of political indifference - or hostility - and budgetary challenges. Since 2009, the number of pupils at integrated schools has increased by around 4%, despite evidence that individual schools remain popular with parents. As a result, over 90% of pupils at all levels in Northern Ireland are educated in overwhelmingly separated environments, and there has been little change since the Agreement. In public at least, the emphasis has appeared to shift from integrated education to 'shared education' based on direct co-operation between Catholic and controlled schools. Indeed the Programme for Government (2011-2015), the Education Bill and T:BUC all failed to mention integrated education directly. Under T:BUC, 10 new shared campuses were proposed, although to date, none has been completed. Much of the financial support for the development of shared education was provided by external funders, replacing almost all of the money previously devoted to inter-community work by the Department of Education.

Figure 6:
Number of Pupils at Integrated Schools in Northern Ireland 2007-2017
Source: Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)
Annual Report 2016-17
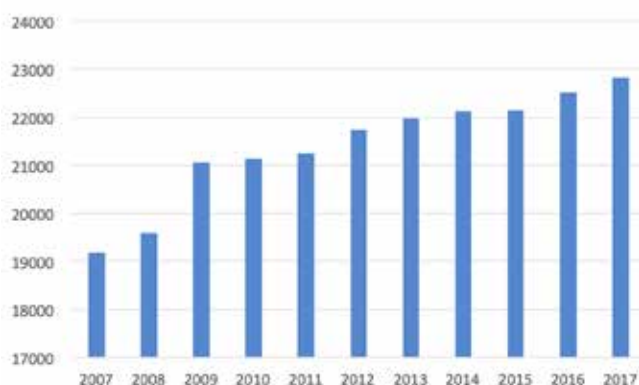
Consequences and Conclusions

1. Segregation in residence remains a significant issue. Despite the new shared housing schemes developed under the T:BUC programme, there is still real evidence that these can be set back through targeted paramilitary action.

2. Northern Ireland remains a deeply divided society. There is some evidence from the statistics of change in residential pattern including a measurable reduction in highly segregated wards. However, some of this may have been experienced in one part of the community as loss. Likewise, while there has been very little change in the number of interface barriers, very few new barriers have been erected.

3. The growth of integrated schooling in Northern Ireland appears to have come to a halt under devolution. In some cases, shared education seems to have been set against integrated education, as an alternative rather than a complement to integration. In general, children born after the Agreement are educated in the same schools as previous generations. Shared education has produced a number of important and innovative projects but has not yet been adopted wholeheartedly.

4. The T:BUC strategy remains the only policy framework on community relations since devolution. At the same time, it is hard to identify significant progress on core issues of sharing and separation, or on issues such as the past, flags and emblems or parades. According to the 2016 Peace Monitoring Report, under the policy:

   • 101 summer camps had been established;

- Funding had been allocated to three shared campuses, with approval for two more;
- Two shared neighbourhoods had been established and three were under construction and;
- A number of barriers had been removed from interfaces in Derry/Londonderry.

As a result of Fresh Start in 2015, additional money for supporting initiatives to promote sharing and dealing with the past was provided by the Treasury. Furthermore, a Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition was established to bring forward proposals to tackle contentious issues which has not yet reported.

4. Violence, Policing and Security

One of the most dramatic and most promising changes in Northern Ireland since 1998 has been the stark reduction in violence connected to politics. Furthermore, there has been no significant rise in other crime, as is sometimes associated with areas emerging from conflict. Whereas in 1998 there were 71 murders in Northern Ireland, that number has fallen to less than 20 in every year since 2009/10.

In July 2017, the PSNI published figures showing recorded crime at its lowest level for almost 20 years (PSNI Crime Statistics 2016-2017). In 2016, the Peace Monitoring Report commented that "Crime in Northern Ireland is lower than in England and Wales across all categories - except, notably, 'assault with minor injury' and 'wounding'" (Peace Monitoring Report, 4, p25). Many

parts of Northern Ireland have become peaceful and relatively crime free.

In 2015, a survey of 165,000 adults across the UK conducted by the Office for National Statistics found that Fermanagh and Omagh was the happiest place to live in the UK. In the survey, Northern Ireland recorded higher average ratings for well-being for all measures except anxiety (https://www.ons.gov. uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/ wellbeing/bulletins/measuringnational wellbeing/2015-09-23).

Writing in 2012, Paul Nolan commented: "The number of shootings and bombings fell by over a quarter in 2011, from 171 to 124, a drop of 27%. During 2011 there was one security-related death, one fewer than in 2010. Together with 2008, this marked the lowest number of security-related deaths since the police began keeping records in 1969. The number of people injured dropped from 116 to 80, and the number of victims of paramilitary assault from 94 to 73. All forms of paramilitary violence were down on 2010, and significantly down on the figures a decade ago. While post-conflict societies like Kosovo, Guatemala or (especially) South Africa have often recorded increases in crime following a peace settlement, this has not been the case in Northern Ireland. And while conflict societies often record high rates of domestic violence, again this has not been true of Northern Ireland, where the incidence of abuse has consistently run below other parts of the UK" (Peace Monitoring Report No1, 2012, p7).

Likewise, the Fresh Start Paramilitary Panel, reporting in May 2016, noted that:

"In respect of the groups on ceasefire, there have been major changes since the 1990s. The scale and nature of paramilitary activity has altered significantly. The numbers of shootings, bombings and assaults have greatly reduced, as has destruction of property. Some 470 people were killed in 1972 as a result of the conflict, contrasted with 2015, when two people were killed. Although there have been fluctuations, after 2006, the annual total numbers of shootings, bombings and paramilitary assaults markedly reduced." (Report of the Fresh Start Paramilitary Panel, 2016).

Changes in Policing in 2000, 2007 (when Sinn Féin joined the Policing Board) and 2010 (when Justice was devolved) radically altered the relationship of policing to politics in Northern Ireland. Despite controversy over legacy and historical issues, confidence in policing was high, as reflected in survey after survey. By the end of 2015 more than 80% of respondents in a Department of Justice (DoJ) survey considered that the PSNI were providing an equal and unbiased service across the community divide.

This was confirmed in a series of polls for the Policing Board on confidence across community boundaries. Research by Millward Brown Ulster for the Policing Board in 2014 concluded that the gaps in confidence had less to do with community background than with economics, class and geography, with particular difficulties among younger people from lower class backgrounds and with stresses in North and West Belfast. It came as a surprise to many in 2015, that residual paramilitarism continued to threaten political stability.

Following the murders of two men in Belfast during the summer of 2015, the UK Government accepted that none of the paramilitary groups on ceasefire for many years were actively planning or conducting terrorist attacks. However, individual members, or former members, of paramilitary groups continue to engage in criminal activity. As a consequence, tackling paramilitary activity became an important element of the talks to re-establish devolved institutions, leading to the establishment of a three-person Paramilitary Panel.

Figure 7:
Confidence in the local police 2007-2017.
Source: NICS 2007/08 to NICS 2016/17 in https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/r-and-s-bulletin-38-2017-
perceptions-policing-justice-and-anti-social-behaviour-ni-crime-survey-2016
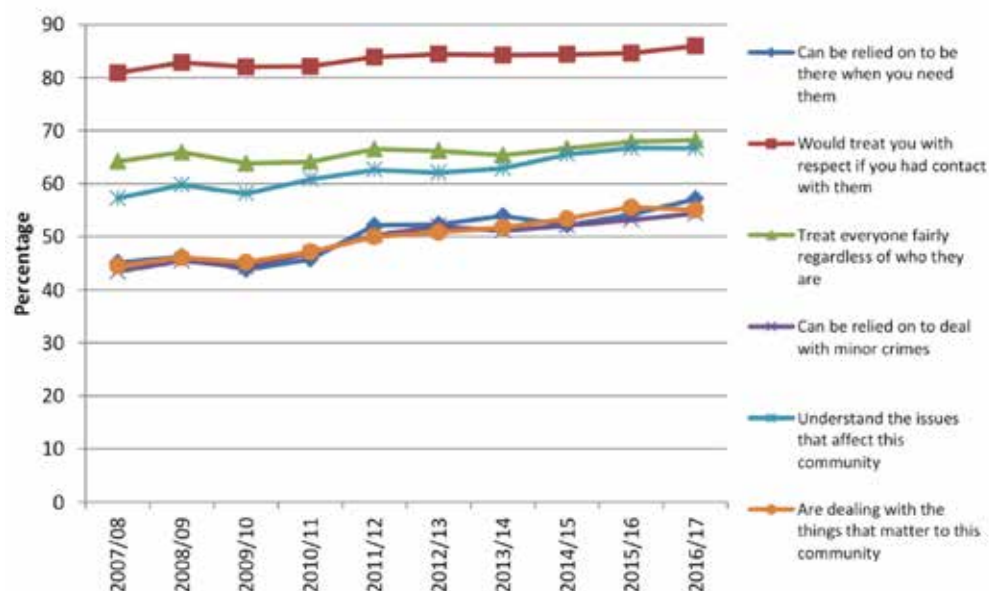
Table 6:
Confidence in policing by community background
Source: Northern Ireland Policing Board

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	ALL	C	P	ALL	C	P	ALL	C	P	ALL
Very/Fairly satisfied	62	74	68	67	80	73	68	77	73	67	71	70
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21	17	19	19	15	17	21	13	17	19	15	17
Very/Fairly dissatisfied	15	8	12	14	4	9	10	10	10	13	12	12
Don't know/refusal	2	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1

Reporting in May 2016, the Panel noted:

"Notwithstanding the progress outlined above, paramilitary activity continues in Northern Ireland. Almost 20 years after the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement, the greatest threat to security is the armed campaigns of what have come to be known as Dissident Republican (DR) groups and real security alerts caused by these groups continue to force people out of their homes and disrupt traffic, and other aspects of daily life." (p8)

As a consequence, evidence of progress in relation to violence and security threats in Northern Ireland has an ambivalent character. Hate crime statistics show a persistence of sectarian hate crime, alongside a marked growth in reported crime against other targeted minorities (see Table 8).

Table 7:
Recorded hate crime in Northern Ireland
(selected years)
Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland

	2011-12	2015-16	2016-17
Racist crimes	458	853	660
Homophobic crimes	120	210	162
Sectarian crimes	885	1,001	694
Faith/religion crimes	6	19	18
Disability crimes	15	74	54
Transphobic crimes	3	12	13

The level and nature of violence in relation to inter-community issues or ethnonational conflict has changed beyond recognition. At the same time there is still evidence of residual paramilitary activity and organisation. One of the less obvious consequences is that this has sharpened the division between areas which have changed beyond recognition since the 1990s and other parts of Northern Ireland where segregation, embedded hostility and paramilitary organisations remain part of everyday life. Thus, the Police Report of Recorded Security Situation Statistics for 2017 noted that:

"Compared to the preceding 10 years between 1997/98 and 2006/07, the level of security related incidents in Northern Ireland has been lower and has remained relatively consistent during the past decade. However, a significant threat still remains as evidenced by the increased number of security related deaths over the past three years, the increasing trend in the number of paramilitary style assaults since 2012/13 and the continued number of shooting and bombing incidents." (Police Recorded Security Situation Statistics (31st July 2017) https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/security-situation-statistics/2017/july/security-situation-statistics-to-july-2017.pdf)

The evidence suggests that violence related to the security situation has settled into a pattern which might be described as 'the new normal'. PSNI security statistics published in 2017, illustrate this consistency clearly:

Table 8:
PSNI Security Statistics: Trends over the last 10 years by financial year
Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
Deaths	1	5	2	1	1	2	1	3	3	5
Shooting Incidents	42	54	70	62	67	64	54	73	36	61
Bombing Incidents	23	46	50	99	56	44	69	36	52	29
Punishment Shootings	7	20	46	33	33	27	28	36	14	28
Punishment Assaults	45	41	69	50	46	36	42	58	58	66

In 2016, 'The Detail', an important online investigative website, noted that:

"From 2006-15 paramilitaries were responsible for 22 killings, more than 1,000 shootings and bombings, 787 punishment attacks, there were nearly 4,000 reports of people forced from their homes by paramilitaries, while security alerts halted more than 4,000 train services." (http://www.thedetail.tv/articles/hundreds-still-being-victimised-by-paramilitaries-each-year)

Paramilitary organisations, and violence by paramilitaries, therefore continues to be a significant issue in parts of Northern Ireland. Since 2007, however, much of the activity has taken place in areas which are understood to be exclusively 'loyalist' or 'republican', rather than as part of an active sectarian 'tit for tat' pattern. In 2016, the Paramilitary Panel commented:

"The nature of attacks by paramilitary groups has also changed. Far fewer attacks are sectarian and there are no longer the regular retaliatory cycles of sectarian attacks that occurred during the conflict. In fact, the majority of attacks now appear to be conducted against members of their own community." (p7)

This is evident, above all, in statistics relating to intimidation and so-called 'punishment' attacks, almost all of which were treated as 'internal' rather than inter-community matters. In total, 56% of the shootings and assaults were carried out by loyalist organisations and while the majority of punishment shootings were carried out by republican organisations, the majority of assaults were carried out by loyalists (https://wiseabap.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/beyond-the-societal-shrug.pdf).

The persistence of paramilitary punishment attacks is part of a wider pattern where continuing 'gatekeeping' and 'coercive control' have shaped the pattern of community development. The Paramilitary Panel noted that criminality, coercive control and ongoing recruitment continue:

"Approximately 1,000 people were driven out of their homes between 2012/13 and 2014/15 due to paramilitary intimidation from within their own community. In the same period, the NIHE accepted 99 cases linked to sectarian intimidation and 77 to racial intimidation, many of which are likely to be connected to members of paramilitary groups. In addition, the NIHE spends an estimated average of £0.8m p.a. on its Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED) programme, through which the NIHE purchases the houses of those forced to leave as a result of a threat or intimidation and where the PSNI confirms that they are at risk of death or serious injury. The NIHE provides funding to NIACRO for its Base 2 programme, which supports individuals and families at risk from paramilitary violence. Base 2 receives around 1,200 referrals per year and approximately 28% of these referrals can be attributed to paramilitary intimidation. Others are also involved in this work and it should also be noted that these figures do not include those who have had to leave Northern Ireland as a result of intimidation." p9

According to 'The Detail', almost 4,000 people were forced from their homes by paramilitaries between 2006 and 2015, equivalent to 132,000 cases in Great Britain if carried out to the same extent (http://www.thedetail.tv/articles/hundreds-stillbeing-victimised-by-paramilitaries-each-year). Above all, the persistence of a systematic paramilitary threat has posed challenges and risks for police officers, creating significant obstacles to the normalisation of policing in a number of areas. The Paramilitary Panel found a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system in many areas, where communities saw the police as ineffective in tackling criminality linked to members of groups and in responding to local concerns, such as anti-social behaviour.

The scale of the challenge should not be underestimated. In 2016, the PSNI estimated that 27% of its budget (approx. £297m) was spent on 'policing the security situation' (Paramilitary Panel, P11). Despite this, the Paramilitary Panel found that "no-one is in a position to compel groups to disband. None of the groups we have met were prepared to use the word "disband", even in a situation where their structures and activities had been transformed or withered away" (p5). Furthermore, more than 100 prisoners remained in segregated accommodation within Northern Ireland jails, subject to special regime outside normal criminal rehabilitation.

Table 9:
Prisoners with Separated Status in Northern Ireland
Source: Department of Justice

Year	Bush (loyalist)	Roe (republican)	Total
2009	56	40	96
2010	44	48	92
2011	31	50	81
2012	34	59	93
2013	45	68	113
2014	54	77	131
2015	53	54	107

And, while the focus of counter-terrorism across Europe had overwhelmingly moved to the threats posed by Jihadi terrorism, Europol reported that in 2016:

"All attacks reported by the UK were acts of Northern Irish-related terrorism and involved 49 shooting incidents and 27 bombing incidents. Of these, four involved attacks on National Security Targets." (https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/2017-eu-terrorism-report-142-failed-foiled-and-completed-attacks-1002-arrests-and-142-victims-died).

They also pointed out that 123 people had been arrested in 2016 for terrorism-related offences. Adopting internationally consistent language enabled dissident terrorism to be set in a wider context: "Many attacks involved firearms or small IEDs such as pipe bombs but they have also employed larger and/or potentially more destructive devices such as vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs) and explosively formed projectiles (EFPs). There have been four DR IED attacks in 2016, including a fatal IED attack on a prison officer. All groups retain access to a range of firearms and explosives and there is an ever-present threat of under-vehicle IED attacks." (p15)

Consequences and Conclusions

1. There has been a sharp reduction in day-to-day violence since the 1990s that has now become a clear pattern. Many parts of Northern Ireland now report low levels of crime, and a high quality of life. This is particularly true where the evidence of violence has declined. For many people, life is unrecognisable from that experienced between 1969 and 1998. At the same time, some parts of Northern Ireland continue to experience high levels of paramilitary activity, and the involvement of paramilitaries in recruitment, community coercion and 'gatekeeping'. This division has become marked and persistent.

2. Opinion surveys repeatedly find high levels of confidence in policing. Concurrently, the persistence of security threats to officers has inevitably impacted on the implementation of "Policing with the Community". Northern Ireland continues to have a high level of terror threat and these issues have been politically significant at times of tension. Full normalisation in both communities and policing remains in the future, and impacts on the quality of life in some areas.

3. The Paramilitary Panel found a 'culture of unlawfulness' in many parts of Northern Ireland related to paramilitarism. Above all, it conceded that the state cannot, of itself, disband paramilitary organisations. Continuing punishment attacks, evidence of economic crime, symbolic challenges such as flags, emblems and bonfires continue to create the impression that the rule of law is limited. This has a continuing impact on the long-term stability of Northern Ireland and on the ability to decisively tackle issues such as peacewalls and segregation in residential areas.

Ongoing political difficulties had direct effects on policing. While the Assembly remained suspended after March 2017, no further political appointments were made to the Policing Board, although a skeleton Board remained. In late 2018, the Secretary of State introduced legislation at Westminster to allow appointments, as concern grew that senior appointments in the PSNI might be delayed.

5. Economy and Equality

The service sector remains at the core of the Northern Ireland economy. According to the Labour Force Survey for November 2017, 615,000 jobs of a total of 750,000 (or over 80%) are in the service sector, with only 11% in manufacturing. Between 2007 and 2017, the proportion of jobs in the public sector fell by 8.4%, at an accelerating rate since 2014 (https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/ nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/J47eb_20172_ Publication%20%20FINAL.pdf).

Since 2008, the level of employment in the private sector has increased by 8.6%, picking up sharply in the last five years.

Figure 8:
*Index of NI Private and Public Sector Jobs (June 2008-June 2018)*

Source: NISRA,   Northern   Ireland   Quarterly Employment Survey, 2018

However, growth in the number of jobs in Northern Ireland has been notably slower than in the rest of the UK since the financial crisis in 2008-9. Two features mark out the Northern Ireland economy in particular. Economic Activity in Northern Ireland remains markedly higher than elsewhere in the UK, rising to 28.4% in 2017, while more than 11% receive disability living allowance, nearly double the rate in Great Britain.

The Belfast Telegraph reported that almost three quarters of claimants had been claiming DLA for more than five years (Belfast Telegraph, 25 February 2016). In addition, 17% of 16-25 year olds in Northern Ireland were classified as 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' (NEETs), compared to 13% in the UK as a whole.

Figure 9:
Seasonally-adjusted economic inactivity rates (16-64) 2007-2017
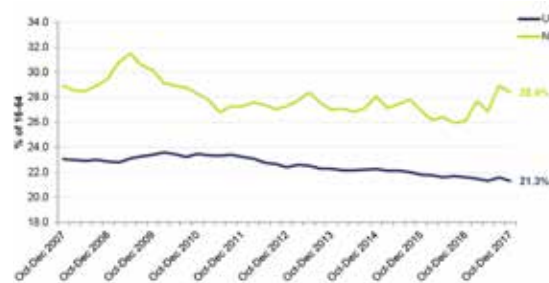
Source: NISRA Northern Ireland Labour Market Report, February 2018

According to the Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), in April 2016, median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees were £495, up 2.2% from £485 in 2015, 92% of average level in the UK as a whole. Almost all of this gap is accounted for by lower wages in the private sector, as many public sector workers are covered by UK-wide national agreements. According to ASHE: "Median gross weekly earnings in the private sector were 30.3% lower than in the public sector at April 2015, and this was true for both men (30.9% lower) and women (43.2% lower). In the UK, the equivalent median gross weekly earnings for all employees were 13.1% lower in the private

Growth in the number of jobs has been notably slower in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the UK since the financial crisis of 2008-9.

There remain differences in the employment profile of Protestants and Catholics in the public sector. Whereas Protestants continue to dominate in security related employment, this is not reflected in other sectors such as health and education employment.

sector than in the public sector" (https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/ASHE-Bulletin-2016.pdf).

Economic inequality in Northern Ireland reflects the pattern of liberal economies across Europe. Measured by the 'Gini coefficient', overall inequality in Northern Ireland is less than the UK average, particularly when housing costs are taken into consideration. In general, the level of personal wealth is below average, largely as a result of the relatively small number of so-called 'super-rich'. NISRA records that the proportion of households living on less than 60% of the median income is approximately 20% or one in five people in Northern Ireland, similar to other parts of the UK.

According to the Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), in October 2018 median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees were £521, an increase of 4.2% from £500 in 2017 and the largest increase recorded since 2015 (5.4%). This is around 94% of average level in the UK as a whole. Almost all of this gap is accounted for by lower wages in the private sector, as many public sector workers are covered by UK-wide national agreements. In 2017, according to ASHE: "Earnings in the public sector decreased marginally (0.3%), however remain above earnings in the private sector (34% higher). Whilst public sector earnings in NI were similar to those in the UK, earnings in the private sector in NI remained below those in the UK and are now equivalent to 85% of the UK private sector median." (https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/NI-ASHE-Bulletin-2018.PDF).

Religious background of the monitored workforce. Source: Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

There remain differences in the employment profile of Protestants and Catholics in the public sector. Whereas Protestants continue to dominate in security related employment, this is not reflected in other sectors such as health and education employment.

Figure 11:
Composition of the various components of the public sector (2014). Source: Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
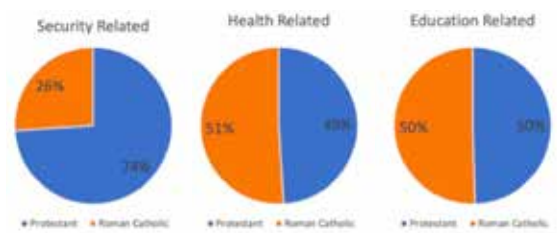
In the long run, educational participation has been seen as crucial both to economic development and anti-poverty strategies. The starkest difference in academic performance is between those in grammar schools and those in non-selective secondary schools. Although the gap in attainment has reduced somewhat in recent years, the consequences of selection have been widely criticised by educationalists, business leaders and international reports. There has, however, been no consensus on change to the current system, and attempts to impose change polarised along unionist-nationalist lines.

According to the 2014 Peace Monitoring Report, 83% of those entitled to Free School Meals attended non-selective schools, compared with 16% in Grammar Schools, and nine of the ten most disadvantaged schools were Catholic (Nolan, 2014, p94). Yet according to the Report; "the overall exam performance of Catholics is better than that of Protestants, despite patterns of socio-economic background running in the other direction. In 2011/12 63.5% of the Catholic cohort attained five 'good' GCSEs, as against 60.2% of their Protestant counterparts" (Nolan, 2014, p94). Crucially, when setting these categories against each other, "an attainment spectrum opens up with at the upper end Catholic girls not on school meals and, at the other end, Protestant boys who have free school meal entitlement. Using the measure of five good GCSEs including English and maths the gap between non-FSME Catholic girls (76.7%) and Protestant FSME boys (19.7%) is 57 percentage points." (Nolan, 2014, pp96-97)

In 2016, 50.2% of female school-leavers entered higher education compared with only 34.7% of males. In contrast, 13.5% of males entered training compared with 5.9% of females. According to the NI Peace Monitoring Report of 2016: "Catholics (45.4%) are more likely than Protestants (39%) to take the higher-education path. And of those who do, Catholics (73.8%) are more likely to attend institutions in Northern Ireland than Protestants (60.5%). In the decade to 2014-15 participation in Higher Education fell by 2.7%, to 63,965. Of those, a quarter (24.8% in 2014-15) attended institutions in Great Britain, many in Scotland and the north-west of England, and this proportion is increasing." Significantly,

whereas over 85% of students leaving Northern Ireland-based Higher Education Institutions were employed in Northern Ireland, only 42% of those who studied in Great Britain returned, falling to 35% among those in full time study.

"Catholics (45.4%) are more likely than Protestants (39%) to take the higher-education path. And of those who do, Catholics (73.8%) are more likely to attend institutions in Northern Ireland than Protestants (60.5%)...

In the decade to 2014-15 participation in Higher Education fell by 2.7%, to 63,965. Of those, a quarter (24.8% in 2014-15) attended institutions in Great Britain, many in Scotland and the north-west of England, and this proportion is increasing."

Consequences and Conclusions

1. Economic and health inequality are persistent critical factors in understanding Northern Ireland politics. Over many decades, the poorest areas of the cities were at the forefront of political violence combining to leave a legacy of Multiple Deprivation which is still the dominant feature of the city landscape. Economic Inequality is considerably greater than the residual difference in poverty as measured between ethno-national communities. Since the Good Friday Agreement, there has been little change in the location and nature of poverty and deprivation. This has led to persistent complaints that the 'peace dividend' has not reached the most difficult areas. Until now the links between poverty and conflict have been addressed by policy in a largely piecemeal fashion. Yet it is clearly true that poverty and the absence of any prospect of a prosperous future fuels resentment and alienation while sectarian division prevents any meaningful efforts to generate a flourishing economy by deterring investment and driving the flight of talent. Connecting anti-sectarian work with action to prevent and address poverty and deprivation is critical, especially in education, health, security and planning. Policy for a shared future must have a clear economic and social dimension. This will require changes not only by and for those living in areas of multiple deprivation but adjustments across society.

2. Although political parties are organised on 'ethno-national' or sectarian lines rather than along socioeconomic divisions, the implications of economic divisions shape both experience and action in both communities. The absence of stable government and the implication that socioeconomic factors are treated as politically secondary means that these factors, and the way in which they interact with issues of peace and conflict, continue to be dealt with in a disjointed fashion. Sectarian divisions complicate efforts to apply equality-based criteria to social policy. Furthermore, the ways in which actions designed to address poverty and interventions aimed at reducing conflict interact is poorly developed, often setting policies at odds. Although it receives relatively little attention, economic inequality across society, especially in the area of employment, is now clearly more significant than the differential between communities. .

3. The high rates of economic inactivity and the high numbers of young people who are not employed or in education or training has the effect of reinforcing social and economic divisions in Northern Ireland. The life chances, and outlook, of those in areas of high deprivation are likely to be very different to those in wealthier suburbs. Combined with political segregation this has a significant impact on change, and on approaches to both the past and the future.

4. There are clear patterns in educational participation with long term implications. In particular, the pattern of participation in higher education suggests that the educated population living in Northern Ireland is becoming proportionately more 'Catholic' and more female. Furthermore, there is support in the evidence for the thesis that those studying in Great Britain are disproportionately less likely to return to Northern Ireland after their study.

PART THREE:

Addressing Sectarianism in Northern Ireland

In drawing up this Review, and in order to root our reflections in reality, a number of people from a wide range of disciplines and experience of community life in Northern Ireland were invited to give advice on practical ways forward in addressing sectarianism. Everyone consulted fully endorsed the desirability of a review of this kind and we are very grateful for their enthusiastic and generous participation which helped to shape and form the perspectives and ideas set out in this Review.

It is worth recording that there was general consensus that political stalemate was disastrous to the interests represented by people consulted. By and large, they volunteered views addressing the same problems while speaking from different angles, and the answers largely complemented each other. Some new insights emerged in relation to old problems, especially from educationalists and youth workers. All were frustrated by lack of progress in building a better-functioning and more equal society in Northern Ireland.

In discussion, people were asked to reflect on changes in the nature of sectarianism in recent years, and to identify things that had changed for the better and things that gave them reasons for concern. Some of their most important thoughts are reflected here for consideration.

Reflections on Sectarianism

Improvements

1. *"Northern Ireland is a society still emerging from violence and living with conflict. Sectarianism and racism are both still live issues. People get hurt because of them.*

There have been generations of mistrust. Within the two communities, integrated contact is limited. People are only fully themselves and at ease when they are at home. There is an urgent need to face up to and address sectarianism in an active way."

2. *"Children are growing up in a much better place now. Young people communicate, engage and interact differently. There is greater acceptance of rights of gay and lesbian communities."*

3. *"Some things have changed since 1998. Politicians are more accessible. There have been more 'small signs' of togetherness. But people are still very quick to go back to negative thinking. Yet there is political unity over issues such as youth participation and mental health."*

4. *"Policing has been very carefully managed and the service now relates to all communities much more equally. People in nationalist areas are now engaging with police but the situation is still not perfect."*

5. *"In the nationalist community there is much more normalisation in engagement with the state. The GAA are taking positive steps to improve relations with the police."*

6. *"Inter-church marriage is much easier now."*

There is an urgent need to face up to and address sectarianism in an active way.

"Leadership in addressing sectarianism means stepping out of the comfort zone. Power is in the hands of those elected but people vote tribally."

7. *"Opportunities for change in education have actually grown and improved. Some schools are notably more successful than others in engaging with young people, in changing negative attitudes and ensuring that maximum benefit is derived from educational experience. The approaches used by such schools should be studied and replicated elsewhere. The issue of accommodating faith-based education is still a problem. Shared education even in integrated schools is needed."*

8. *"The relationship with the state, especially in nationalist communities, is much less polarised. But, positives seem to be mostly led by communities, not the politicians. Changes are taking place by popular demand but we don't see the same middle road change in power sharing."*

9. *"Identity cannot be about eliminating diversity. Principled reciprocity and a bigger vision to accommodate diversity are needed."*

10. *"Sport and the arts create the possibility to mentor young people. Sport is a useful way of engaging people and gives a sense of ownership and empowerment. There are real opportunities to use the arts as a tool for youth development. Dance, music and sport can contribute to raising aspirations and give a sense of belonging."*

11. *"The issue now is that the good we need to do must be permanent, co-ordinated and not subject to stop/go patterns. Building relationships is not easy, with separate schools and separate areas. We need to create a civic space for speaking and inter-acting. There has been a serious reduction in investment in inter-community relationship building."*

12. *"FDI has been crucial in raising standards and horizons and it is vital that it continues to be at the forefront of government planning. There is also a need to balance this with strong emphasis on indigenous businesses which are the backbone of the country. A booming economy will encourage business to give support to community building and helps close social gaps."*

13. *"Clergy interaction can be very important. Examples like 4 Corners Festival can at least provide opportunities to encourage communities to come together."*

Challenges

14. *"Sectarianism comes in at three different levels: polite, professional and violent. We need to properly understand the problem before identifying the solution. Sectarianism is stronger in working class communities. Instability is now due to both the political situation and Brexit, drawing in the relationships with neighbours in UK and Ireland."*

15. *"The momentum of history is hard to resist. One of the main concerns today is that young people are wanting to leave the country. This can be due to general dissatisfaction with life in Northern Ireland, disconnection from local society, alienation from adults, resentment at social inequalities or the part played in certain areas by self-appointed "gatekeepers". Some young people are largely ignorant of recent past troubles and do not understand "traditional" sectarianism. This could be easily changed by events."*

16. *"There was progress in periods of stability when politicians were working together. We need more public leadership. Violence has reduced but has not gone away entirely. Media reporting can be unhelpful."*

17. *"Peace is a challenge to communities subject to ancient divisions. Negative attitudes to the "other" community are deep rooted. Even the issue of segregation is questioned - is it "sectarianism" or just part of "my culture"?"*

18. *"There is a need to build positive and good working relationships between communities, ideally led by political parties. The core of the Assembly is sectarian and there is a question over the adequacy of the political system to address the complexities. People often find themselves confronted by a simple question – "them or us?""*

19. *"Politics seems more polarised now than over the last 20 years. A positive programme is needed to create a better life. Shared Future has become 'shared out' future. Talking is not enough - action is needed."*

20. *"The issue of class is everywhere and we ignore it. Young people from deprived areas have the same aspirations as middle class young people but circumstances are such that they do not expect to achieve these in life."*

21. *"Peace has not made a difference in certain communities. Many people feel they have no place in the future. Paramilitary attacks are on the increase and young people are being punished and recruited."*

22. *"Young people need 'one good adult'. A lot of young people do not have 'one good adult' to lead and guide them or it is possible that "their" adult is connected to paramilitaries. There is a huge deficit of leadership in loyalist communities."*

23. *"A lot of politicians are more liberal than their leadership and do not agree with their party on certain issues. They need to be prepared to put their heads above the parapet. As it is, the Assembly passes little legislation, and the health service is an example of a big issue which no one is tackling."*

24. *"A lot is written about sectarianism, but it must be tackled positively, and beyond documents, by everyone, including the Churches. The will to invest in sustained peace is missing."*

25. *"Young people need political engagement. There has been a reduction in investment to bring young people together. Give young people a say in things they care about. Teach empathy through peer to peer relationships."*

26. *"Leadership in addressing sectarianism means stepping out of the comfort zone. Power is in the hands of those elected but people vote tribally."*

27. *"Funding has no objectives set from the top. There does not appear to be a will to invest in sustained change despite many pilot programmes. T:BUC is not nearly ambitious enough about building positive relationships. Public consultation is required to get issues onto the table. We could use new technology to communicate."*

28. *"With the highest rates of economic inactivity in the UK, it is to everyone's advantage that determined efforts should be made to engage the economically inactive into the world of work. This is especially so in regard to young people. The benefit system does not currently help anyone into work. Too many people are still too far away from the labour market. A cultural change is required. The tax system is not geared to help the problem and the same communities are always the ones being left behind."*

" Peace has not made a difference in certain communities. Many people feel they have no place in the future. Paramilitary attacks are on the increase and young people are being punished and recruited."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Review has sought to identify basic reasons behind the sectarianism which underlies life in Northern Ireland today. The following are some suggested guidelines to govern action throughout the community to bring such divisiveness to an end and to replace it with reconciliation and greater mutual understanding. Ideas for action are also put forward to help achieve this objective.

The issue of sectarianism must be prioritised and elevated to the top of the public agenda alongside the economy.

Suggested Guidelines

1. It should be formally recognised that the problem of sectarian division in Northern Ireland is still with us, both above and below the surface, and that it shows no sign of going away;

2. The continuing existence of sectarian antagonism is damaging and disruptive, for both relationships in society and for the development of the economy;

3. Concerted, consistent and determined action on the part of the whole of society will be necessary to eradicate sectarian attitudes and support reconciliation, tolerance and mutual respect. There is evidence that a large proportion of people would welcome this;

4. Such concerted action must come from throughout society, both from the top down and the bottom up;

5. Government must lead the way by espousing principles and policies designed to stimulate change;

6. To do this effectively, the issue of sectarianism must be prioritised and elevated to the top of the public agenda alongside the economy;

7. This Review suggests how principles and policies might be developed and brought to action by both government and the community;

8. It is important from the outset that the community should feel able to identify with, shape and support proposals for change and that means are found to enable this to happen;

9. Key features of the policy proposals must include:

    a. Immediate action to address inequalities of any kind and, in particular, in relation to those areas of disadvantage where economic and social conditions fall short of providing a good quality of life for all;
    b. Given the economic and social importance of retaining our brightest young people, emphasis should be placed on ensuring that young people are made welcome, are recognised as having the right to participate in discussions of proposals which will have a lasting impact on their lives and are given fair and equal opportunity to take advantage of proposed changes;
    c. Stepping up momentum to find satisfactory solutions to issues which greatly contribute to community divisions such as paramilitarism, legacy issues, flags, emblems and parades;
    d. Making strong efforts to counteract alienation from processes of government and administration, thereby endeavouring to increase civic responsibility and participation. Improvements in public services would do much to raise levels of satisfaction;

10. In order to bring the proposals in this review to wider public attention, a conference should be called to facilitate further discussion and recommendations for action.

Sectarianism should be addressed from the centre of
government, in a thorough and concerted manner on the basis
of clear principles and policies.

Ideas for Action

Sectarianism remains a significant challenge for our society and is likely to remain so for some time. Nonetheless, we are convinced that there are opportunities for remedial change, should the will be there, as well as opportunities for action across society. Not only government, but also public bodies, business, churches, charities and the public at large can play an invaluable role in promoting lasting reconciliation and in helping to build a brighter and more prosperous future for our citizens.

Furthermore, the future of Northern Ireland depends on attracting and retaining bright and able young people, and on increasing the diversity of our society. Moving past sectarianism is a crucial contribution to that task and can teach us many lessons which will be important in the future.

Our meetings with partners were very fruitful and full of ideas. The ideas which we now put forward are not intended to be either mandatory or exhaustive but to stimulate consideration of opportunities for intervention across society to bring about beneficial change. Some of what is suggested may be seen as aspirational, while other proposals may be easier to implement. We are hopeful that, together, they will offer a good starting point in planning a worthwhile journey for the entire community.

1. Political and Policy Leadership

In recent years, there appears to have been some loss of momentum in progress towards a shared future and a sense that actively reducing sectarianism no longer has sufficient priority. This carries the risk that the benefit of learning and experience over the years, especially in practice and capacity, is slowly evaporating. Without sustained commitment from government, there is no obligation in policy or on public services to acknowledge or prioritise the need to change the legacy of divisiveness or the need to encourage inter-community reconciliation. Instead, we proceed 'as if' public policy, in Northern Ireland is operating without having to address issues of fundamental division. As one person commented:

"What we are doing at the moment is not enough. We need to actively take care of regular sustained relationships. Social integration must be a project."

This leads to a perception that "relationships are not taken seriously" and policy is focussed more on managing the extremes, rather than making a future together by encouraging relationships of mutual regard and partnership. Against the background of deep division, change will require emphatic leadership and policies engaging almost every Department in the Executive.

Action points for consideration:
- Sectarianism should be addressed from the centre of government, in a thorough and concerted manner on the basis of clear principles and policies;

- To ensure maximum synergy, government should encourage the diffusion and application of such principles and policies in actions taken by and within the community;

In our consultations, we found strong support for provision of arrangements to enable civic voice to be heard on important issues on the public agenda.

- To this end, government should establish a body charged with ongoing responsibility for development, co-ordination and oversight of such policies throughout the community. Ideally, this would be a government department, supported as necessary by a consultancy board drawn from across civic society.

2. Civic Voice

In our consultations, we found strong support for provision of arrangements to enable civic voice to be heard on important issues on the public agenda. Any programme or body set up to bring this about would need to be capable of drawing on views from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Additionally, steps should be taken to facilitate greater mutual understanding in relation to inter-community issues of a divisive nature. In particular this would necessitate provision of means of direct and in depth inter-community consultation where there is danger that divisions over social issues are likely to polarise on a sectarian basis.

"Global trends suggest that the form of democracy we have is not enough. We need to actively take care of regular sustained relationships".

"Politicised conversations are too simple, especially when politics gets so quickly reduced to one issue. Politics is 'sectarianising' us, and we need to get people into the room"

"Supporting hard and open conversations can only happen if it is independent. Absence of good conversation becomes bad conversation."

Action points for consideration:
- In the absence of any provision in the nature of a civic forum, government should give serious consideration to the appointment of a body, appropriately funded and staffed, with an advisory board drawn from across civic society, which would be empowered to convey researched and balanced findings on matters of public concern to government, either on request or voluntarily. Such findings should also be publicly available.

- Government should invest in ensuring provision of such facilities as are necessary, to provide support for problem solving, mediation and conciliation on issues of inter-community difference.

3. Business and Economy

The economy has much to gain from a society not riven by sectarian divisiveness. Business has a huge contribution to make in giving the lead to reducing sectarianism, by opening up communities to global best practice, by encouraging communication, collaboration and the creative use of technology and by supporting entrepreneurship.

Ensuring that people can contribute through the labour market is not only in the best interests of business itself, but also of individuals and of society as a whole. Encouraging an entrepreneurial culture will require role models and investment which stimulate curiosity, learning and engagement with others.

Optimism among young people is closely associated with their belief in the future. Finding ways for business to engage creatively with young people before they enter the labour market, and as

Business could sponsor an independent think-tank that would stimulate and inform discussion on matters of economic, social and cultural importance.

they begin their careers, would make a critical contribution to changing attitudes and experience, particularly using the opportunities of technology. Examples such as 'CoderDojo' and 'Time to Code' have already been highly successful.

Action points for consideration:

- Business could create a fund for community and social benefit and progress. The fund should have clear principles of supporting a non-sectarian society and be strictly independent of party politics. Putting cash back into NI under the umbrella 'Creating The Future';

- Business could sponsor an independent think-tank that would stimulate and inform discussion on matters of economic, social and cultural importance;

- Business could support the integration of anti-sectarian principles into Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Reinvestment in Northern Ireland. There are already a number of good models of practice: Ulster Carpets have developed a local approach which was led from the top and gained local support while Westside Partnership reinvests part of their profits in community enterprise. Companies could be encouraged to develop similar approaches, tailored to their own circumstances and locations;

- Business or a business-supported foundation could sponsor a cross-community programme based around new technology and technology innovation, that supports communication and collaboration across boundaries and takes technology into the community, using a variety of venues;

- Government, business and schools should encourage a new culture of entrepreneurship, curiosity and aspiration through a business-supported youth development and opportunities scheme, targeted at both primary and secondary levels across the community;

- A business-led foundation could sponsor (or participate in supporting) the Youth Volunteering Academy suggested in the Fostering Youth Leadership and Participation section below;

- The flexible investment of the Youth Bank has been effective. Increased resources for the Youth Bank and a programme of investment which also impacts on sectarianism would be helpful;

- Government and a business led foundation could support neighbourhood businesses and social enterprises to engage with their neighbourhoods, with particular emphasis on mentoring and local role models;

- There should be a mechanism to recognise civic champions to promote inter-community relationships through entrepreneurial activity or trade.

4. Mentoring and Intergenerational Engagement

It is strongly argued that investing in children and young people from an early age, especially those at risk of falling out of education, would have significant long-term benefits for individuals, communities and society and for enabling a reduction in violence and destructive patterns of behaving. In addition, by encouraging children to engage with others, the risk that young people remain in single community settings could be addressed.

Investing in children and young people from an early age, especially those at risk of falling out of education, would have significant long term benefits for individuals, communities and society.

Underpinning youth leadership and participation, the importance of 'one good adult' in youth development was raised on a number of occasions. In the absence of mentoring, young people can be easily drawn into destructive relationships by others in the community or by peers. Participants identified the concept of 'ethical followship', setting role models and rewarding patterns of ethical behaviour, as a critical underpinning to future leadership. Youth work and schools offer opportunities not only for curriculum and classroom activity but for mentorship and personal development. There was strong support for programmes of sustained relationship and continued mentorship, although it was recognised that this takes time.

There are numerous opportunities to engage parents and grandparents as mentors and supporters, especially around early years and primary education. As one person noted:

"Hope is a tangible thing – it draws people in. Parents want what's best for their children and we need to involve them."

There are already examples of sustained cross-community programmes that galvanise parents to develop relationships with other parents and grandparents from different communities as part of children-centred programmes.

Action points for consideration:
• The extension of support for and from parents and guardians by involving them in inter-community programmes for children in early years and Key Stage 1 education;
• Building on the principle of 'one good adult', mentoring should be extended through schools and youth services to include a formal programme of mentoring to engage with others in positive collaboration.

5. Fostering Youth Leadership and Participation

For adults working with young people, one of the most important priorities was nurturing the learning leadership capacities of young people in communities. As one person noted:

"We need to look after people who are change makers and bring them together in a pastoral way."

Participants reported a significant alienation from the political system among young people, which was not the same as an absence of energy to engage with important issues.

"In Northern Ireland only 47% of young people are registered to vote. The political class need to hear from our children. Young people need VOICE. If young people are not represented by political parties, they are more likely to join violent movements."

Action points for consideration:
• Government should shift the emphasis when funding anti-sectarianism to personal outcomes, rather than organising

Government should establish a permanent programme to ensure that young people have clear alternatives to involvement with paramilitaries in areas of high paramilitary activity.

Every child at school should be educated and encouraged to understand that they belong together with others of different backgrounds.

programmes or events (outputs). Currently the attention of too many schools' programmes is on developing programmes rather on the outcomes for young people. This might include targets for facilitating lasting friendships between young people across all backgrounds;

- Business could sponsor a Youth Volunteer Academy financed by private, public and philanthropic sources and delivered by the Youth Service and other key public agencies, which encourages civic engagement over a period of time and at a number of different ages, and which encourages volunteering on a cross-community basis;

- Under Fresh Start, the government should establish a permanent programme to ensure that young people have clear alternatives to involvement with paramilitaries in areas of high paramilitary activity;

- The PSNI and Policing Board should develop a comprehensive programme to address anti-social behaviour involving young people and ensure that all issues are addressed lawfully rather than through brutal attacks by paramilitary gangs;

- Lowering the voting age to 16, in line with Scotland, and promoting a culture of 'town hall meetings' for young people at schools on key issues would be an important investment in civic culture;

- Scotland, England and Wales have a formalised Youth Assembly and it has been suggested that this should be a priority in Northern Ireland.

6. Schools

Schools continue to play an important role in the lives of every child and family. While change cannot rely on schools alone, no attempt to reduce or eliminate sectarian division can succeed without the full involvement of schools. While integrated education has supporters and doubters, there was widespread agreement that the school system should actively and consistently encourage relationships beyond traditional community divisions.

Action points for consideration:
- Every child at school should be educated and encouraged to understand that they belong together with others of different backgrounds. Every school should actively design their curriculum and programmes of activity to ensure that this wider belonging to a shared society is central. In other words, every school should plan their curriculum as 'shared education', including identified elements of shared classroom and recreational activity in each week of school;

- Alongside shared education, integrated education remains important. There is significant opportunity for applying the concepts of shared and integrated education through the classroom curriculum. At primary level, literacy, arts, sport and project activity could all be expanded to include elements of anti-sectarianism. At all secondary levels, History, Politics, RE, English, Irish, Sport and PE, Drama, Art and Music could include clear elements which address differences, common ground, cultural traditions, diversity and contentious debates;

Alongside a focus on educational attainment to give young people opportunities in the labour market, there is a crucial role in connecting youth work with citizenship by engaging young people with values, contention and issues of lawfulness.

- Teacher Training does not currently prepare teachers to engage with difficult issues of contention. This gap within teacher training needs to be addressed and become mandatory for all trained teachers;

- Opportunities for co-operation between youth services and schools over legacy, sectarian and diversity issues could expand the opportunities and approaches available within the school timetable, especially in secondary education;

- Every school should make use of known best practice in developing positive attitudes in pupils towards the value of education and also towards those from other communities.

7. Youth Work

Workshop participants agreed that the capacity of youth work to encourage exploratory personal and community engagement with sectarianism and other contentious issues through peer-led and informal education has been neglected and undervalued. As one person noted:

"If sectarianism is to be addressed, youth services can play a crucial role, by ensuring that young people participate in and shape change. Especially among young people, informal and peer influences are critical. Youth workers can help reshape issues with authority in schools."

Alongside a focus on educational attainment to give young people opportunities in the labour market, there is a crucial role in connecting youth work with citizenship by engaging young people with values, contention and issues of lawfulness.

Although hard to measure, participants were adamant that this investment represented important value for money.

Action points for consideration:
- The infrastructure of statutory and voluntary youth services needs to be properly supported and encouraged across Northern Ireland. This should include an anti-sectarian education framework which encourages young people to explore issues of difference and build friendships of lasting value;

- Youth work can play a significant part in developing civic responsibility. Organisations working with young people should be supported to create programmes for participants from a different community or cultural background, including mentoring programmes.

8. Justice and Policing

The basis of a shared society is the rule of law and confidence in justice. Developing a 'culture of lawfulness' requires the building of sustained relationships between people of all backgrounds and the justice system. In certain areas of Northern Ireland, policing remains associated with historic hostility to the law, and there is evidence of continuing community tolerance for paramilitary intimidation in response to anti-social behaviour. In particular, there is a need to renew the relationship between young people and policing. Young people continue to find themselves caught between competing groups of adults telling them what to do: between paramilitaries and police. "Local boys" are all vying for control in certain areas. Youth workers reported that intimidation in some communities is widespread, with many young people reporting that they 'have

Youth workers reported that intimidation in some communities is widespread, with many young people reporting that they 'have nowhere to go' and are frightened.

nowhere to go' and are frightened. All of these contribute directly to sectarianism, to allegations of injustice and inequality, and to a tolerance for violence outside the law.

A sustained focus on refiguring historic hostilities and developing relationships between the police and young people would make a significant contribution to approaches to reducing the tolerance of violence on a sectarian basis and further remove any residual justification for paramilitary groups.

Action points for consideration:
• The DoJ and Northern Ireland Policing Board should establish a priority fund dedicated to the repair or establishment of relationships between the police, young people and communities where there is evidence that relationships are strained, and especially where there is evidence of paramilitary pressure or activity engaging young people. This could be based in local councils, perhaps through Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs), and involve partner services and community partners as well as the police;

• Each PCSP should establish a forum for police and young people where young people and police engage in identifying issues and solutions which can be practically implemented;

• The PSNI should encourage police participation in a Youth Volunteer Academy suggested above under Fostering Youth Leadership and Participation;

• The PSNI, DoJ and NIPB should develop imaginative and robust mechanisms for reporting intimidation, paramilitary

activity and sectarian/racist behaviour, along the lines of 'third party reporting' for hate crime.

9. Churches and Faith Communities
Churches remain important sources of faith, community and organisation for many people, reaching across generations. In Northern Ireland, differences have too often been associated with sectarian divisions. With their association with schools and youth services, churches and faith communities have a vital opportunity to set an important tone.

Hospitality and generosity have been central to each of the Christian denominations and major global religions. Opportunities to demonstrate both could make a critical difference to the atmosphere of relations between communities. Sustainable inter-community relations in Northern Ireland will not emerge without humanity and mercy.

Action points for consideration:
• Leaders of all major churches should come together to mount and operate actively an agreed programme to encourage acceptance of and respect for other faiths;

• Churches could establish a centre of inter-community hospitality which demonstrates core faith commitments in public;

• Churches could establish a programme of values, faith and volunteering which recognises practical commitment to anti-sectarianism within the RE syllabus for Northern Ireland. This should also be open to people of no professed faith and of other world faiths;

There are numerous opportunities within sports and the arts to create conduits for shared experiences and learning, and developing relationships based on performance and participation.

- Catholics and Protestants consulted in this process expressed a hope that Northern Ireland as a whole would offer a welcome to Pope Francis, when he visited in August 2018.

10. Arts, Sport and Cuture

There are numerous opportunities within sport and the arts to create conduits for shared experiences and learning, and developing relationships based on performance and participation. While much is already being done to bring people of different backgrounds into positive shared experiences, it was emphasised that co-ordination, direction and continuity were needed in order to achieve a lasting impact.

Above all such opportunities stimulate both enthusiasm and imagination. As one person noted:

"Food, sport, art and music are all conduits to bring people together and to develop relationships between them."

Bands, choirs and orchestras, whether working in schools, separately or in youth centres, provide opportunities for challenging but unthreatening and shared experiences and for mutual appreciation. They also contribute directly to enriching cultural diversity. Musical traditions can be shared without losing their distinctiveness. As one person noted:

"We need both music for all, and music for the gifted. It provides everyone with something and it can establish a real sense of shared identity and a new sense of participation, which is very important."

Galleries and museums provide unique and safe opportunities for challenge, education and learning. Visual artists can inspire creativity and open avenues to new experiences. Drama, novels and poetry provide some of the most direct opportunities for learning about others or representing a variety of experience. While "the arts" have flourished in Northern Ireland, it is important to ensure that they are widely available and accessible.

Sport engages people as participants, supporters and viewers. By providing the most popular form of entertainment, sport encourages teamwork, allegiance and emotion like no other activity. Historically in Northern Ireland, this passion has sometimes taken on a sectarian edge, and the challenge is to ensure that children are introduced to sports which have traditionally 'belonged' to other people and to ensure that sporting allegiances are not used as a non-religious proxy for hostility. As one person noted:

"Sport is dominated by traditional sports which are all community driven. There is a need to bring kids together at an earlier age – everybody could be exposed to soccer/gaelic football/rugby. Otherwise there is room within the non-traditional sports. We could broaden the range of sport offered to young people and create more options beyond rugby/gaelic and try basketball, for example"

"Sectarianism and racism remain serious risks. There is not enough urgency for working on solutions. For example, sports need to look at their participation in equality terms. Songs, symbols, anthems, names of stadiums, relentless hostility in the singing, abuse are all issues."

Efforts to address sectarianism would be enormously helped from a designated communications strategy which could inform, entertain and energise.

Action points for consideration:
- Trusts and government could invest in imagination by encouraging artistic and musical endeavour in primary schools, including an annual inter-school drama and/or arts production to create inter-school experience on a systematic basis;

- Sponsor an artist, poet or musician in every school;

- The Education Authority could create an annual 'festival of diversity' which emphasises variety and change in Northern Ireland and moves venue every year;

- The Universities should ensure that all trainee PE Teachers try different sports at university: *"In schools after university most teachers go back to their traditional sport."*;

- Following the introduction of 'Ireland's Call', consideration should be given to investment in a a shared sports anthem for Northern Ireland, composed by a well-known musician.

- We would encourage all National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sports to support outreach programmes and identify targets for participation of minority groups in sport, including a sectarianism target;

- Councils should invest in inter-sports partnerships and clubs in towns and villages where 'civic sports associations' sponsor teams in different sports;

- Local Councils could have sports and arts 'partnerships' involving local sports and arts organisations which have a commitment to provide opportunities for shared and open experiences across sectarian lines.

11. Campaigning and Media

It was common cause in discussions that efforts to address sectarianism would be enormously helped from a designated communications strategy which could inform, entertain and energise. Regard should be paid both to the responsibilities of those in charge of media outlets, and to the opportunities presented by different forms of technology including the printed press, broadcasting and public cultural events.

Young people are extremely responsive to social media and to changes in ideas and fashion. As one person noted: *"Riots can be organised through technology – why can we not organise peace?"* However, to remain effective, social media campaigns need to be targeted, capable of change and variety and shaped by young people and their role models. Good campaigns can reach large numbers and address important issues, just as hate crime and intimidation can flourish.

It is no longer possible to simply 'let things happen'. At the same time, there is a need to direct people to more time-consuming forms of engagement including broadcasting, exhibitions and public events.

Action points for consideration:
- Private and voluntary organisations should establish and support a communications strategy to maintain focus on a bigger vision which accommodates diversity. Such a 'Grounds for Hope' campaign could include people from different sectors working together, including philanthropic organisations;

Close co-operation and co-ordination in financial planning and input, to ensure maximum return on policy investment.

- Too often, social media has become an 'echo chamber' rather than a vehicle for communication between people of different views. A campaign should include a regularly updated social media and PR campaign of professional standard which is designed to engage a wide audience, including 'good news stories' and targeted advertising addressing emergent issues of sectarianism, hate crime and discrimination;

- Sectarianism demands that we 'make things more porous', breaking out of traditional lines of communication. The BBC and Channel 4 should commit to producing landmark television, film and radio material which specifically addresses anti-sectarianism, including drama.

12. Funding

Many participants identified that funding for anti-sectarian work has reduced over time.

It is very strongly hoped, following this Review and its outworkings, that this situation will be reversed, not only as regards generous provision from the government for new policies as required, but also in appropriately redeploying existing provision to maximise support for new policies adopted.

As this Review makes clear, it is essential that further resources are made available by other interests within the community – business, public bodies, churches, charities and others as they seek to play an important part in expelling sectarianism and building peace and understanding among our people.

It goes without saying that every opportunity should be taken to secure benefit from philanthropic sources and enterprises which

are sympathetic to the work now being suggested. In order to introduce transparency and fairness into funding management, a new addition into current supervisory structures was suggested in the form of a Funding Ombudsman.

Action points for consideration:
- Just as this Review calls for co-ordination of effort throughout the community in devising and implementing policies to bring about beneficial change, so, too, should there be close co-operation and co-ordination in financial planning and input, to ensure maximum return on policy investment. "Partnership schemes offered by more major funders - perhaps on a "reciprocal incentive" basis - could draw on a wider range of others into active engagement."

- Future Funding Models should focus on building and sustaining relationships, changing the narrative of division and supporting ways to overcome structural barriers to partnership and collaboration. Building sustainable relationships also requires partnerships and projects built over time and there was a plea for longer commitments in funding. A number of flagship projects should invest in people as well as capital.

- The government should establish an Independent Funding Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, who can ensure equal access to funding, fair monitoring and effective practice and who can identify bad practice in funding and provide remedy.

THE WAY AHEAD

Writing this Review has convinced us that sectarianism remains a serious issue in Northern Ireland. Although it has deep roots in the past, it is important to address it now before it also shapes our futures. Ignoring its impact or hoping that it might diminish without action does not seem to us to hold out hope of sufficient change.

These proposals are based on recommendations from the wide range of participants in our research. On their own, none will achieve the end of sectarianism that we want to see; but together and implemented with genuine commitment they would be a significant step in the right direction.

It is our view, that the principles of non-sectarianism must be enshrined and modelled in our political and policy leadership. However, as we have emphasised throughout, concerted and ongoing support from across our society would be an essential pre-condition to the successful outcome to our proposals.

As a first step, the Sir George Quigley Fund intends to sponsor a conference at which the findings of this Review can be brought before a wider audience and opportunity be given for further discussion and development of the ideas which it puts forward.

The Sir George Quigley Fund Committee

- Professor Duncan Morrow
- David Gavaghan
- Ronnie Kells
- Andrew McCracken
- Moyra Quigley

- Peter Smyth
- Joanne Stuart
- Dan McGinn
- Theresa Donaldson
- Alec McRitchie
- Kain Craigs

December *2018*

Sectarianism remains a serious issue in Northern Ireland. Although it has deep roots in the past, it is important to address it now before it also shapes our futures.

APPENDICES

NOTE ON TERMS

Some of the terms in this report rely on a knowledge of common usage in Northern Ireland, especially where they are used in quotation. Sometimes these refer to terms used in common speech to refer to similar ideas which, if analysed are each slightly different:

1. Naming a contested society

In Northern Ireland, political conflict has been focused on the right of Northern Ireland to exist as separate part of Ireland. In everyday speech, therefore, some people refer to Northern Ireland as 'the north of Ireland' while others believe that this is an important part of their political identity. Some, though now fewer, refer to Northern Ireland as the 'Six Counties', while others use the geographically inaccurate term of 'Ulster'

In this report we have tended to use the term Northern Ireland, not because we wish to take sides in this debate, but because almost all of the statistics are recorded on an official Northern Ireland wide basis.

2. Communities in contest

The close association of politics and religion in Northern Ireland means that identity groups are sometimes referred to with religious names and at other times with names that are more strictly secular and political. In general, the term Protestant can often be used interchangeably with (British) Unionist and likewise the term Catholic sometimes substitutes for (Irish) Nationalist. Sometimes the term 'republican' means a specific branch of anti-Britishness and sometimes it refers to a form of nationalism with a tradition of armed struggle. Likewise, the term 'loyalist' can refer to those associated with paramilitary organisations in Protestant areas or, more generally, to refer to those living in working class areas.

The terms are not always used precisely or accurately in speech. In this report we have tended to strive for accuracy in the text and to reflect speech usage when using quotations.

3. Armed Groups

The language of armed conflict is always contested. In Northern Ireland terms 'terrorist', and 'paramilitary' were used widely before 1998 to describe armed actions outside the law. Since the ceasefires of 1994, the term terrorist has been used less frequently. However active groups in loyalist areas are still routinely referred to as paramilitary groups, while those in republican areas are now largely defined as 'dissident republicans.' Except where referring to counter-terrorism and radicalisation more broadly, we have used this language in the report.

4. Complex Government Structures

In 1998, the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement established an Assembly for Northern Ireland with a cross-community Executive consisting of a mandatory coalition. There were also a number of interdependent and interlocking structures. In this report, they are referred to as 'the Assembly' or 'the Executive'.

5. Policies for Tackling Sectarianism

Since 2005, Northern Ireland has had a variety of umbrella policies to tackle sectarianism. The original policy (A Shared Future) was published by the British Government in 2005. Although the policy was set aside in 2010, the name has stuck as an umbrella term for official efforts to address sectarianism. In 2013, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed the current strategy which is called 'Together: Building a United Community" going by the rather ugly acronym of T: BUC. These policies are both referred to in the report.

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NOTES