Full Report of Research Activities and Results, May 2001

MAPPING THE SPACES OF FEAR
Socio-spatial causes and effects of violence in Northern Ireland

As outlined in the Report Form and Synopsis, this project analyses the ways in which geographical territoriality shapes communal sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, its social effects and how people in Belfast cope with associated fears in their everyday lives. There is a subsidiary analysis of homophobic violence for comparative purposes, but the main focus is on sectarianism, 'ordinary residents' and a variety of urban 'managers' and how the city's sectarian geography affects their movements, activities and policies.

Background

The conflict, its violence and the resulting residential segregation have been heavily researched (e.g., O'Leary and McGarry 1995; Poole 1995; McKittrick et al 1999; Fay, Morrissey and Smyth 1999; Boal 1982; Murtagh 1993). This provided a sound basis of secondary material for the project. To build on it we focused on fear and its effects as spatially mediated and constituted by a 'national-local' dialectic of territorial rivalry; and we identified some significant gaps in the literature, especially with respect to recent urban restructuring and non-residential dimensions of territoriality.

Territoriality, 'national-local' dialectics and 'zero-sum' games

Conflicts such as Northern Ireland's are conflicts over state borders and territory. They centrally involve territoriality - the use of geographic spaces to control, influence and generally express relationships of power, whether peaceful or violent. Territoriality classifies, communicates and controls through the use of space, the drawing of borders and the regulation of access into and/or out of specified areas (Sack 1986). Territory can be both a 'sanctuary' and a 'prison'; and in situations of communal conflict (whether national, racial, cultural or otherwise) territoriality ultimately depends on the threat if not the actuality of violence, enforcement often requiring relatively few actual episodes of violence (typically augmented by rumour).

National conflicts are often played out - partly in symbolic, partly in material terms - in a 'national-local' dialectic of territorial rivalries where internal 'borders' between opposed groups serve as a proxy for the disputed state borders (Holloway 1994; Anderson and Shuttleworth 1998). The 'local' is shaped by the 'national' but in turn shapes the latter - indeed localised action may be the only form available to most protagonists most of the time. It is a means of mobilising political support for national agendas and it can on occasion have a crucial impact on state policies. Loss and gain of territory on a street-by-street basis is equated with 'losing' or 'winning' the overall national conflict. Thus local territoriality reproduces identity and helps perpetuate violence and threat.

Territoriality has many social advantages including simplifying issues of control, establishing clear boundaries with symbolic markers 'on the ground' (literally on Belfast's painted kerbstones), and giving relationships of power a greater tangibility or 'permanence'. But in circumstances of conflict these tend to become disadvantages, generating further conflict. In general, territoriality oversimplifies and distorts social relations in its assumption of a direct equation between the 'spatial'
and the 'social'. It reifies power and de-personalizes social relationships, while communicating clear boundaries is not necessarily a good thing if they obscure and negate a much more complex reality. In short, conflict is rendered more intractable, and particularly by the direct encouragement of 'zero-sum' thinking, where a 'plus' for one side is typically seen as a 'negative' for the other, and vice-versa.

Whereas 'goods' like democracy, development, wealth, etc., which may motivate rival claims to territory do not have a fixed 'sum' or finite total, territory in contrast is generally finite. And in so far as territory is a material object and a symbol of communal conflict, it directly leads to a 'zero-sum' logic. The 'game' can be played at different spatial scales, and territory is both a 'container' mediating conflicts, and a generator of the 'zero-sum' thinking which reproduces violence.

Northern Ireland conflict research

The main gaps and limitations in the existing literature related to:

- territoriality, people's activity patterns and management policies
- the 'costs of violence' in terms of fear and its continuing, everyday effects
- the changing nature of sectarian violence since the 1996 'ceasefires'
- recent major urban re-developments altering the sectarian geography

Accounts of violence have generally been preoccupied with the more spectacular episodes of direct injury to persons or property. With some significant exceptions such as the INCORE 'Costs of the Troubles Study' (Smyth 1998), there has been little concerted qualitative analysis of fear. Analysis has often tended to remain at a general Northern Ireland-wide level, and much of the work on spatial segregation has been confined to residential segregation. Particular localities, such as the city centre, and other arenas, including places of consumption and production such as shopping and leisure facilities and workplaces, and their dynamic connections with place of residence, have been relatively neglected. Research on religious differentials and 'chill factors' in employment, for example, has generally been confined to a quantitative analysis of survey data for Northern Ireland as a whole (e.g., Smith and Chambers 1991; Murphy and Armstrong 1996), or has mainly used standard questionnaire surveys of a few localities (e.g., Sheehan and Tomlinson 1999). In the arena of schooling many analyses of sectarian effects have been confined to the role of religion in determining subject choice or educational attainment (Cormack and Osborne 1983; Daly and Shuttleworth 1996), or the implications of education for community relations in Northern Ireland generally (Gallagher et al 1993) rather than dealing directly with sectarian effects 'on the ground' at local level where many processes are worked through.

There have also been major changes since much of the existing research was carried out, particularly since the 1996 'ceasefires'. They led to a reduction in the more 'spectacular' incidents of paramilitary violence, but other, sometimes more random, forms of sectarian violence such as street fights and group confrontations have proliferated when the response of shooting became much less likely, though whether in this new situation attacks on minority groups, including gay people, have also increased was less clear. At the same time, the socio-economic restructuring of Belfast through large-scale inward investment and urban regeneration, particularly in locations adjoining deprived areas which have experienced a lot of violence, has created a new geography of opportunity. But whether these developments will benefit the deprived communities remains an open and critical question, one which bears on
wider questions of social inclusion seen as important for reducing violence. A rapidly-changing social policy agenda has sought to address questions of inclusion, particularly with respect to employment, and social need has been spatially-defined in the New Targeting Social Need (NTSN) initiative. This raises questions about the importance of locality in managing a divided city (Dunn 1994, Murtagh 2000), and the problems of policies being ostensibly 'neutral' and 'religion blind' as tends to be the case, as distinct from taking sectarianism and discrimination directly into account, or explicitly seeking to end conflict (Osborne 1996).

**Project rationale**

Understanding how the sectarian geography mediates and perpetuates violence is essential for policies which seek to prevent its continued reproduction. The project focused on particular localities and local territories, and rather than emphasising 'spectacular' violence, it dealt mainly with the more mundane, but also much more widespread and enduring, effects of violence and fear. In a 'post-cease-fire' situation (and probably before), the main social significance of violence is 'deeper' or more indirect than the level of (still occurring) violent incidents. It also sought to assess the impacts of urban regeneration on communities and to evaluate the perspectives of 'city managers' who deal directly or indirectly with violence.

Thus the project dealt with subjective feelings of fear and their social impacts on people who (like the bulk of the population) experience violence only indirectly (or only marginally). It also analysed other arenas of social life besides the residential, going beyond a largely static focus on residential housing patterns to a more dynamic focus on spatial behaviour patterns across a range of activities (consumption, leisure, work, management, etc.). Residential segregation patterns defined the basic sectarian territories, but we wanted to see how different types of people use space and move around the city in their daily lives, the constraints they face and the costs incurred.

**Objectives**

Northern Ireland after some thirty years of armed conflict is particularly indicative of the socio-spatial effects of communal violence, and a revealing case of geography and territory as constitutive of conflict and fear. Our overall objective is to inform the geographical study of violence, and particularly in 'divided societies' where opposed communities - whether defined in national, racial, linguistic, religious and/or other terms - share or lay claim to the same territorial spaces.

More specifically, the project aimed to:

- outline the general patterns of sectarian segregation and types of violence at different spatial scales in Northern Ireland, across the Belfast Urban Area, and in selected local Study Areas (analysis of Census and crime data)

- analyse the social effects of violence and fear on the everyday lives of a representative 'cross-section' (by age, gender, employment status, personal histories, etc.) of residents in the Study Areas

- map out their spatial activity and travel patterns associated with production - workplaces and labour markets - and with consumption - schooling, shopping,
leisure - activities, including the use of statutory and public services - and the coping or avoidance strategies which people adopt towards 'spaces of fear'.

- assess their attitudes towards violence and subjective feelings of (degrees of) fear, including those of particularly vulnerable groups such as children, women, young males and old people, and the association of fear with various types of spaces, including 'interface' areas and 'neutral' spaces such as parts of the city centre or the new 'corporate spaces' of re-development

- show how violence-enforced territorially has symbolic as well as material importance, and serves both as a marker of sectarian division and a reproducer of sectarian strife, thereby indicating how fear of violence is constituted by varies with social and spatial-temporal contexts in complex ways

- outline the temporal variations in violent and fear, both pre to post-'cease-fires', and seasonally (re. the 'marching season'), and by times of day and week

- analyse how a sample of 'managers', with (a) 'conflict-management' or (b) 'ordinary' functional or commercial responsibilities, in the public and private sectors, cope in these situations of sectarian geography and potential violence, and the strategies they adopt with respect to their employees, other institutions, their clients or the general public

- analyse homophobic violence both as (a) one type of (generally) non-sectarian violence which intersects sectarianism and is influenced by sectarian violence, and (b) a basis for comparison to estimate the generalisability of our main findings regarding sectarian violence, including the importance of territoriality

- assess the effectiveness of official policies for controlling violence (e.g., 'peace walls', segregation and mixing) and draw out the wider policy-implications of the research for user-groups, including some of our interview/focus group respondents

The objectives were refined subsequent to the original application. In the interests of manageability, the focus on 'non-political' or non-sectarian forms of violence was narrowed to homophobic violence; the planned household questionnaire survey was dispensed with because of the potential danger to researchers and its limited usefulness; the selected local Study Areas were consolidated into one largely inner-city sector (for reasons outlined below); and additional reorganisation was necessitated by personnel changes (as notified to the ESRC at the time and outlined in the Report Form). But otherwise the original objectives were met by a mix of research methods appropriate to the problems of studying fear.

**Methods**

*Problems studying fear*

Violence and associated fears vary greatly in severity, from minor scuffles to torture and killing, from direct experience of physical injury to hearing rumours of verbal abuse. This range, the subjective and often elusive nature of fear, and its diversity of sources in deep-rooted historical, structural factors as well as direct contemporary threats, necessitated a predominantly qualitative methodology. Furthermore, while subjective feelings and their sources were explored in the in-depth interviews, they
were mainly approached in terms of their more tangible effects on actual behaviour patterns. To assess the effects of sectarian violence/fear, we also needed to filter out 'normal' or 'ordinary' spatial and social effects, such as distance costs, class factors, suburbanisation, gentrification, etc. This task was complicated by the fact that in Northern Ireland 'the ordinary' often has an extra sectarian dimension, and it is further complicated by a marked tendency for people (including our respondents) to give exaggerated and sometimes unwarranted sectarian 'explanations' or 'sectarian readings of sectarianism' (Anderson and Shuttleworth 1994).

Other problems arose in relation to secondary data some of which was problematic in terms of quality, reliability, representativeness and access. Obtaining useful crime statistics from the police, for example, was time consuming and the data lacked locational precision and specificity for types of violence because of confidentiality constraints. Data on violence from non-governmental organisations generally lacked locational information making it unmappable. Some data depended on self-reporting by victims and were of doubtful completeness.

**Research design**

To deal with these various complexities and problems, we developed a 'multi-data source', 'multi-scale' and 'multi-method' research design, using published and unpublished data at Northern Ireland, Belfast Urban Area, and local Study Area scales, and combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. Data sources included the Census, crime figures, newspaper accounts, local histories, but the bulk of work was at Belfast and particularly local Study Area levels, and it mainly involved a range of qualitative methods. However, the quantitative analysis of secondary data, especially those dealing with education and employment (see sample maps in Appendix), and also to a lesser extent with crime, provided a useful context and supplement to the more detailed primary data gained by qualitative methods at Belfast and local levels.

The Belfast level interviewing included council officials, statutory agencies, the voluntary sector, and various service providers, private employers and developers. Issues covered included the management of conflict, coping/avoidance strategies in relation to employees and to clients, the impacts of violence on the provision of facilities and services, and changes since the 'ceasefires'.

To investigate homophobic violence and how it intersects with sectarianism, interviews and focus groups were conducted with sexual dissidents from across Belfast to assess the extent and nature of the violence and intimidation directed against them. Here the issues explored included activity and travel patterns, coping and avoidance strategies, sectarian and 'neutral' spaces and in this case the social construction of non-heterosexual spaces.

The bulk of the work, however, concentrated on sectarian violence/fear in the local Study Areas, investigated largely by in-depth interviewing, focus groups and participant observation.
**Local Study Areas**

The Study Areas form a sector in East and South Belfast (see Appendix), selected to give a representative range of localities, including two nationalist and two unionist working class areas with adjoining, contested boundaries, areas of urban redevelopment, a middle-class area, and an area 'mixed' in class terms and in terms of religious/national identities. The sector was selected because it is mainly inner-city and working-class in character, and included some of Belfast's most deprived areas. Violence, while to varying degrees impinging on all citizens, is concentrated and most directly effects people in working-class areas. This sector also had the advantage of being close to, and its inhabitants could be expected to use, the allegedly 'neutral' city-centre; and it includes or adjoins the city's main re-development area (Laganside and the Gasworks site) where the new 'corporate spaces' are significantly altering the sectarian geography. It has areas of relatively transient, including university student, populations, areas with recent histories of in- and out-migration which are perceived to have changed the 'nationalist-unionist balance', and areas experiencing gentrification merging into middle-class suburbia. The variety of nationalist and unionist areas and different types of 'interface' areas made for interesting contrasts, including the comparison of relationships with the city-centre and the new 'corporate' spaces of re-development.

At its core, the sector comprises a range of distinct nationalist and unionist districts dominated in whole or part by rival republican and loyalist paramilitaries, respectively (and by feuding loyalist paramilitaries within some of the unionist areas). These areas - the Lower Newtownards Road, Short Strand, Markets, Donegall Pass, and Lower Ormeau - closely adjoin each other and have traditionally been in conflict. Unlike the much larger Falls and Shankill districts of West Belfast, they are too small to be 'self-contained' and more interesting for our purposes in that their inhabitants generally have to leave their 'enclaves' and go through or to 'shared spaces' in the course of their everyday activities. In addition Lower Ormeau is the site of Belfast's major dispute about the loyalist Orange Order wanting to march through a predominantly nationalist area. Its point of origin is Ballynafeigh, and in contrast with the religiously homogeneous areas, it is notable in being seen as one of the city's few religiously 'mixed' areas with a substantial working-class population. However, this concept of 'mixing' raises questions about spatial scale and spatial 'mixing' not necessarily translating into social mixing.

**Qualitative research**

Semi-structured in-depth interviewing, supplemented by focus group discussions, was used to explore such issues as access and travel to work, shops, education, statutory services, and leisure facilities; the local histories, stories and rumours told of sectarian conflict; perceptions of paramilitary and other types of violence and fear; issues specific to age, gender, occupation and other social categories; and the coping strategies which people use in particular circumstances. On average the in-depth interviews lasted about an hour, and they and the focus groups were conducted and analysed using an interview-guide approach and a form of grounded theory discussed in Kitchin and Tate (2000). Interviews were arranged either directly with respondents (as in the case of 'managers' and politicians), or through local agencies and community groups (as was the case with the majority of Study Area and sexuality-related interviews). Confidentiality was assured in all cases, and where possible interviews were taped, transcribed and coded using a qualitative data management package.
Participant observation included attending local consultation exercises, workshops and community meetings, involvement with local community organisations providing advice and liaison with statutory agencies, and building up relationships and friendships (extending beyond formal settings) with local residents and community activists. In addition to being interviewed, some respondents provided guided tours around their local areas to explain their territoriality, the nature of their boundaries and changes over time. Moreover, the research assistant lived in one of the Study Area for over a year. Observations were noted in the field and recorded in a research diary, thus richly complementing interview material with local knowledges gained more informally.

In total we talked to over 150 respondents, yielding 116 semi-structured interviews and 9 focus group discussions. In the Study Areas there were 71 interviewees (31 in Protestant communities, 25 in Catholic areas, and a 'mixed' group of 15 people in the 'mixed' area). They involved local residents, community group members, politicians and others; and there were also 5 Study Area focus groups with four separate Catholic and Protestant groups comprising women, and one for girls aged twelve to sixteen.

At the Belfast-wide level, there were 29 in-depth interviews with representatives of bodies with managerial or regulatory responsibilities, including statutory agencies, public services, voluntary sector workers, politicians, and employers. There were 16 in-depth interviews with sexual 'dissidents' from across Belfast, and 4 focus groups involving a total of 26 gay men, lesbians and other 'dissidents' (some of whom were also interviewed).

**Ethical Issues**

The nature and sensitivity of the research topic gave rise to several ethical problems, including the potential danger to the researchers (necessitating the abandonment of the household survey, and provision of a mobile phone); and much of the data generated being confidential. Many respondents spoke only on assurance that the information was unattributable, anonymised and 'off-the-record'. As information on violence relates to criminal activity, we were sometimes placed in awkward situations and confidentiality was paramount at the risk of generating further violence. In relation to 'managers', interview material may deviate from their institution's official policy and if released could jeopardise the position of the interviewee. Similarly, interviews with gay men identifying where they meet (e.g., 'cruising areas') could open up these spaces to attack from homophobes, or other forms of harassment of gay people.

The issues of confidentiality, trust, safety and responsibility became even more pronounced in relation to participant observation which required building up on-going relationships of trust and friendship. Furthermore, in relation to 'sectarian readings of sectarianism' (see above), these requirements could clash with the researchers' need for reflexivity, awareness of the role of discourses in reproducing sectarianism, and of academic knowledge being implicated in discourses of power and state regulation (see Foucault 1977).
Results

The data are being analysed and written up in terms of three main arenas:

- The experiences, fears, behaviour patterns and coping strategies of Study Area residents in different social categories, in relation to their everyday activities and different spatial and temporal circumstances.

- The policies of managers in the public and private sectors who have to carry out their responsibilities within the sectarian 'spaces of fear', or regulate conflict.

- Homophobic violence and fear as an example of (generally) non-sectarian violence which intersects, and interacts and contrasts with, sectarian violence.

These sections are cross-cut and linked by a range of common, interlocking themes, expressed as pairs of concepts which signify alternative explanations, dichotomous or contradictory relationships, or a spectrum between polar opposites. They emerged from the research, apply with modifications to the different parts of the project and highlight the major questions being addressed. The themes cover conceptual/methodological and spatial-temporal issues, and especially behavioural matters where they are a means of summarising findings which by their nature are complex and do not lend themselves to easy or quantitative summary.

Conceptual/Methodological themes

- Sectarian-Normal Perspectives
- Essentialist - Social Reproduction Explanations
- Sectarian Symmetry - Asymmetry
- Regulation - Self-Regulation
- Restructuring - Resistance

Spatial-Temporal themes

- National-Local Territoriality
- Segregation-Mixing
- Territorial Sanctuary-Prison
- Stable-Unstable Territory

Behavioural themes

- Anonymity-Recognition
- Avoidance-Confrontation
- Local Knowledge - Lack of Knowledge
- Predictability-Unpredictability

Conceptual and Spatial-Temporal themes

Some of these, such as the National-Local dialectic and the distinction between Sectarian and Normal Perspectives, have already been discussed. Specifically sectarian processes, factors and types of violence had to be distinguished from more general or 'normal' socio-economic processes and phenomena. The former are frequently exaggerated by participants - in line with Essentialist explanations and 'sectarian readings of sectarianism' - though we also found that some 'managers'
preferred to ignore the sectarian dimension in what seemed a questionable way of appearing 'neutral'. As against essentialism which collapses religious and national affiliations into a given or 'natural' category, it was evident that sectarian divisions are relatively unstable and contested and have to be **Socially Reproduced**.

Our fieldwork showed how (potentially) violent conflicts are sustained by mutually reinforcing foundational discourses based on essentialist reasoning. It is emphasised, for instance, that there are innate and irreconcilable differences between Catholics and Protestants, or that only heterosexuality is 'natural' and 'good', rather than sectarianism and sexuality being recognised as socially, spatially and temporally contingent. This goes with a teleological understanding of history (and memory) in which conflict and competing territorialities are represented as 'inevitable' and 'fated', rather than contingent and relational. Part of the project involved deconstructing and exposing essentialisms and their roles in the reproduction of group identities, assumed to be coherent and uniform, and their continuing conflict. It also became clear that essentialism as received 'commonsense' can percolate the thinking of some 'managers' and policy-makers, not to mention academics.

Our conceptual framework thus recognises that identities are products of particular practices and discursive production, and that space is a crucial sphere in which identities and differences are created and maintained (e.g., how space is claimed, occupied, used, and regulated to the benefit of some and the detriment of others). A Foucaultian approach suggested that territoriality operates through microcircuits of power with hegemony maintained through discursive regimes and spatialised processes of **Regulation and Self-Regulation**. Discursive regimes enable individuals, communities and institutions, including state institutions, to wield power and maintain order and control through processes of definition, legitimation and exclusion. They render governance strategies 'rational' and 'logical', justifying how and by whom places are controlled. Our analysis highlights how these processes are played out and contested across several scales (national, regional, city and local) by different social agents (e.g., state and local authorities, voluntary agencies, community groups and individuals), and indeed it the contestation of the right to govern that is often at the heart of communal conflict. At the level of the individual this leads to self-disciplining or self-regulation and community members are not simply 'victims'. As Sharp et al. (2000) argue, relations of power do not consist merely of acts of domination countered by acts of resistance but are much more complex and are bound up in everyday practices of living. Understanding how sectarianism or heterosexism operate requires an analysis which recognises this complexity.

In the case of sectarianism, the main ethnic 'marker' in the conflict is provided by religion - Protestant of Catholic - but it is susceptible to change, and there is a general absence of other markers, such as linguistic or racial differences. Because of this and the close spatial intermingling of religious groups, territoriality and the labelling of people by residential locality is also pressed into service, and it became clear that the spatial intermingling and the lack of stable 'markers' has contributed substantially to the violence of the conflict. Localities too can 'change sides' with population movements, forced or unforced, and such **Unstable Territories** give territoriality added symbolic importance which feeds into its encouragement of 'zero-sum' thinking (see above). This thinking links with notions of **Sectarian Symmetry** across the divide, which takes a variety of forms including 'tit-for-tat' acts of violence which escalate conflict, 'copy-cat' tactics (where actions or 'stunts' by one group are copied by the other - more often loyalist - side), imputing acknowledged faults in one's own side to the other side as 'just as bad' (whether justified or not), and complaints from both sides about the lack of symmetry in how they themselves are
being treated compared to 'the other'. This required sensitive treatment for while
certain symmetries are important, so too are asymmetries. We had to avoid, on the
one hand, attempting a 'comparative audit' of sectarianism (beyond the scope or
intention of the study), while on the other hand avoiding the sort of unthinking reflex
of some liberal commentators and policy personnel who announce a 'both tribes
equally guilty' verdict, a stance whose main effect is to establish themselves in a
'morally superior' position. It was important to recognise major asymmetries where
they exist, not least because they make the general official approach of
'balanced/equal treatment' problematic and difficult to implement in practice (e.g.,
'provocative' local marches are traditionally much more important and numerous on
the loyalist side and 'equal prohibition' is not a practical policy option; and there are
differences in the random targeting of civilians rather than state forces, and in the
extent of internal feuding). Asymmetries contribute directly to the intractability of the
conflict.

The theme of **Restructuring-Resistance** covers the reshaping of the dominant
relations and reproduction processes of sectarianism, whether 'changing in order to
stay the same', or changing to end conflict, and the resistance's to change which
both provoke. It is clear, for instance, that violent incidents in 'interface' areas set
back progress on cross-community co-operation and reassert a sharp sectarian
divide, whether or not this is intended, and it often is. The theme also has a narrower
application to the major economic, social and land-use changes involved in current
urban regeneration and re-development processes, which have also provoked
resistance from community groups and paramilitary forces.

The **Spatial-Temporal** themes related directly to territoriality and its temporality - the
importance of when activities occur, and cyclical variations by time of day, week or
season, particularly the Easter to September 'marching season' and its traditional
zenith around the 'Twelfth of July' (recently augmented by protests over the
prohibited march at Drumcree), as well as the wider pre- and post-‘ceasefire’
contrasts and hypotheses already referred to. The main spatial theme concerned
**Segregation and Mixing**, distinctions and relations between 'spatial' and 'social'
mixing, and related questions of spatial scale. For instance, the Study Area generally
perceived as 'mixed' contained some segregated sub-areas; and even where there
was a high degree of spatial mixing by residence, it did not necessarily follow that
there was significant social mixing. Conversely, residential segregation did not
preclude substantial social mixing in other arenas of work, consumption and leisure.
In the case of some 'managers', this theme applied to whether workforces were
segregated or mixed, and particularly to the strategies adopted for workers such as
rubbish collectors, postmen or meter-readers who have to travel to and through
sectarianised 'spaces of fear' in providing services, where the issue concerned their
safety from the public or clients. In the more general context of 'conflict
management', there are contradictions between a spatial strategy of 'mixing' or
bringing members of opposed groups together (whether explicitly for reconciliation
purposes, or happening 'naturally' for 'normal' reasons), and a strategy of 'separation'
(or accepting segregation) in order to facilitate social control. The latter policy runs
counter to the official ideology of 'reconciliation' but is in line with actual policies of
'consociationalism' with its belief that 'high fences make good neighbours' - and
literally 'high fences' in the case of the inaptly named 'peace-walls'. As this policy
paradox suggests, there are contradictions between the strategies of different
branches of state, as well as in civil society, and they relate to tensions between
trying to solve the conflict or deciding that 'containing' it is the best that can be
expected.
In general, pressure from local residents was the initial motivation for the so-called 'peace-walls', emphasising that territory is typically seen primarily as Sanctuary, a means of defence, or of escaping or 'containing' the effects of the violence of the 'other side'. But sanctuary living also increased other forms of vulnerability as those within specific areas could be identified as belonging to the 'other side', with space playing a key role in the targeting of random victims for sectarian attack, which in turn further intensified the need to strengthen the sanctuary areas. These areas of course also provided a base from which paramilitaries have launched their offensive actions, either against the 'others' territory (mainly the case with loyalists) or against state forces (predominantly the case with republicans), and all the paramilitaries have had to 'secure' and 'police' their base, ensuring local support and guarding against informers and so forth. But this also leads to the meaning of territory being reversed from sanctuary to Prison for at least some of the inhabitants, trapped in their 'own area' and at the relative mercy of paramilitaries from 'their own side', whether the issues concern political differences or the unofficial 'policing' of behaviour deemed anti-social', or simply racketeering, drug-dealing and other crime on the paramilitaries' own behalf. In organised crime in 'normal' environments (e.g., London's East End) territoriality generally plays an important role, and in Belfast 'territories' were in a sense provided 'ready-made', greatly facilitating the 'criminal turn' made by some paramilitaries. Here the truth, by its very nature, was impossible to ascertain in particular cases, but we got the distinct impression that the very substantial scaling down of offensive operations since the 'ceasefires' has meant that 'internal' operations and the 'prison side of the territoriality coin' have become relatively more pronounced.

Temporal issues were also raised by the Stable-Unstable Territory theme. Some territories have clearly been identified with one 'side' (and in some cases, one particular paramilitary organisation) over a long period and are likely to remain so. Other, more unstable areas, ostensibly more 'mixed', may be (actually, or interpreted as being) in a process of changing their 'belonging'. 'Interface' areas clearly have this potential which further fuels conflict in these contact zones, though they may in practice be seen as 'no man's land' which neither side dares occupy. As already mentioned, the potentially unstable nature of territoriality generates conflict. There is however another type of unstable territory which is temporary, typically found within 'neutral' spaces such as the city-centre, and more in the nature of 'shared' space on a 'time-share' basis. It simply takes on the connotations of whatever group is in short-term occupancy (e.g., in part of a public bar), though an aggressive assertion of temporary occupancy in 'mixed space' may fuel perceptions of a more permanent 'take-over'. Some respondents claimed to see this happening in the city-centre, though others disagreed. The issue can arise on a larger scale as when Belfast's main Orange march is re-routed through 'mixed' areas such as Ballynafeigh and they are decked out in loyalist colours.

**Behavioural themes**

Much of the interview material concerned people's spatial behaviour, knowledge of localities and coping strategies. Study Areas residents asked about Anonymity-Recognition issues repeatedly pointed out that the rival communities lived 'cheek by jowl' and that they know the people living in the 'other' district through lifetimes of passing them on the road, sharing the same buses and bus stops, shopping in the same shops, using the same post office, seeing them collecting their uniformed school children, and being recognised in turn (though socialising, much less inter-marriage, is rare). Across these micro-geographical divides, individuals (usually male) may be credited with membership or association with paramilitary
organisations, sometimes correctly, sometimes not. Where inter-district conflict brings a host of people onto the streets to 'defend' their area, people may later be labelled 'UVF-' or 'IRA-man'. Even when an individual is anonymous, s/he may be 'recognised', sometimes with justification through spatial movements or other 'clues', but often through less justified essentialist thinking which greatly exaggerates recognisable differences. For managers who have to organise workers who travel to deliver services to the public, we have seen there is a choice between mixed and segregated workforces which relates to the Anonymity-Recognition issue.

The single most important factor influencing residents' spatial practices involves managing levels of visibility and options on an Avoidance-Confrontation spectrum. Individuals appear to be constantly managing their behaviour and choices in order to reduce, or in some cases to increase, their visibility in the various spaces they utilise in their daily lives. While being recognised by local people generally ensures safety within the 'sanctuary' of one's 'own areas', the courting of recognition outside it in 'neutral' spaces (e.g., by wearing particular colours, football jerseys, etc.) may be an assertion of rights but would often be seen as confrontational. Whilst going to some locations which are deemed 'out-of-place' is viewed as an acceptable level of risk-taking, others are viewed as highly dangerous. Those individuals, for example, who take up employment opportunities in locations which are viewed as 'high-risk' are often seen by members of their own community as being 'silly' or stupid. They are viewed as taking unjustified risk and admonished accordingly. These individuals are seen to be ignoring the body of information which local people must utilise in making sensible spatial decisions to avoid trouble. There is a collective expectation that individuals should regulate their own behaviour on the basis of this knowledge, to ensure that their external movements involve only justifiable risk. Such group judgements of individual risk-taking amount to group regulation of spatial choice.

Residents were seen to possess very detailed Local Knowledge of their areas and the location of boundaries which are often invisible to the uninitiated. Whether or not these boundaries are identified by group emblems and markings, local people possess a complex body of knowledge about how to negotiate them. Their knowledge is a 'text of fear' or a 'boundary rulebook'. It provides information on the appropriate use of different types of space, which when properly utilised acts to reduce the likelihood of sectarian attack. It deals with the micro-geographies of localities - whether particular corners, sides of the street, places to cross the road, particular clumps of bushes, individual bus stops or bus routes. The information contained in this 'boundary rule book' cannot, however, be viewed as a simple or fixed list of directives to be followed by any individual going 'from A to B'. Instead it is a complex body of local knowledge, highly contingent and often specific to different genders, age groups and other categories, which is under daily (re)negotiation with changes in seasonal and political conditions.

Another coping strategy, particularly when there is a possibility of recognition, involves a range of choices along an activity continuum of Predictability - Unpredictability. While ritualised sectarian behaviour tends to be highly predictable, unpredictability in one's personal behaviour can substantially reduce vulnerability. For example, when people travel to work or use facilities such as unemployment offices in areas where they are in a minority, their attendance is highly predictable, and many respondents spoke of their strategies for safe arrival and departure by consciously building in unpredictability in time and space. It could mean varying times of arrival and departure, but this flexibility may not be an option for workers, and they have to use alternative strategies such as varying their routes and/or modes of transport.
A general assumption underpinning the residents' negotiation of space is that their ethnic identities are going to be recognised. They cannot risk assuming anonymity, and spatial freedoms are severely curtailed as they use a complex body of information to assess the relative dangers of particular spatial decisions. But anonymity is the desired state except by those engaged in confrontational forms of behaviour in boundary areas or supposedly 'neutral' spaces. Our research into managers' strategies showed a similar concern with issues of anonymity, recognition and the avoidance of violence with respect to their employees. The interviews with gay people indicated they too were centrally concerned with questions of visibility and avoidance. In all three arenas, territoriality and ideas about behaviour being 'in' or 'out of place' played a central role. Further analysis of these themes will allow us to draw conclusions about the territoriality of public violence in general.

Activities & Outputs

We have to date (co)organised three academic and two other meetings. Dr Kitchin co-organised a session on 'Emerging geographies of difference and defiance' at the Conference of American Geographers in Hawaii in 1999, and in 2000 Prof. Anderson and Dr. Kitchin organised a day-long session on 'Geographies of fear' at the annual Institute of British Geographers (IBG) Conference at Sussex. We organised a two-day meeting in Belfast on spatial approaches to violence for several other VRP projects, and a joint seminar with the other Northern Ireland VRP project. Three further seminars are planned for:

- August at Belfast Pride reporting our results on homophobic violence
- October (with the other Northern Ireland VRP Project), reporting our overall findings to policymakers, community and other representatives
- January 2002, a session on divided cities at the annual IBG Conference to be held in Belfast.

So far we have presented five conference papers and several more are planned for this year. Currently we are writing three book chapters, including a chapter for each of the two VRP volumes being edited by Prof. Stanko this autumn, and drafting five papers for peer-reviewed journals. We are producing two books, an overall 'book of the project' and one developing the work on sexuality in Belfast. The conference papers already presented were two at the IBG conference in Sussex in 2000, two to the Conference of Irish Geographers in Cork in May 2001, and a paper on 'Fear' to an Anthropology conference in Belfast earlier this year.

Impacts

The research in its various strands has proved very interesting to those who have taken part, including community workers and others in the Study Areas, personnel with managerial responsibilities, and members of the gay community. Our processes of gathering information have triggered discussions among some of our respondents on issues which they had tended to take for granted as merely 'normal'. Illumination of such 'normality' as at times less than normal or acceptable has led them to reflect on their situation and practices. We have already informally started the process of feeding back findings and insights to respondents, and groups which lacked a research base have found this particularly useful. This was clearly the case for instance with homophobic violence and fear as our work here represents one of the
few pieces of research in what is a very under-researched topic in Northern Ireland. A seminar planned for the autumn will continue this feedback process with selected respondents and 'user groups'; and we have started discussing the research with officials in the Northern Ireland administration.

Future Research Priorities

In focussing on the mundane and everyday aspects of violence and fear in Northern Ireland, particularly in terms of travel, access and social inclusion, and also in exploring connections between homophobic and sectarian violence, the project has suggested several avenues for further research. One such area is sexuality and migration, in particular the emigration of sexual dissidents from Northern Ireland, which is being developed by Drs. Kitchin and Lysaght and a grant application is in prospect. We are also developing the theme of access to jobs and services which is of particular interest to Northern Ireland policymakers in relation to geographical policies to reduce deprivation, because of the strong equality agenda on access to public resources. Here a grant has been obtained jointly with the University of Warwick to evaluate the behavioural environment and mental maps of young people in Belfast. The aim is to investigate in detail their decision-making processes with respect to education, training and jobs and the constraints of fear in Belfast compared to analogous experiences (e.g., regarding race) in British cities.

Select Bibliography


