

CAPTURING URBAN CONFLICTS - BELFAST: WE STILL HAVE THESE ISSUES.

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CONFLICT IN CITIES
AND THE
CONTESTED STATE



Belfast: 'We Still Have These Issues'

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




Conflict in Cities: Europe and the Middle East

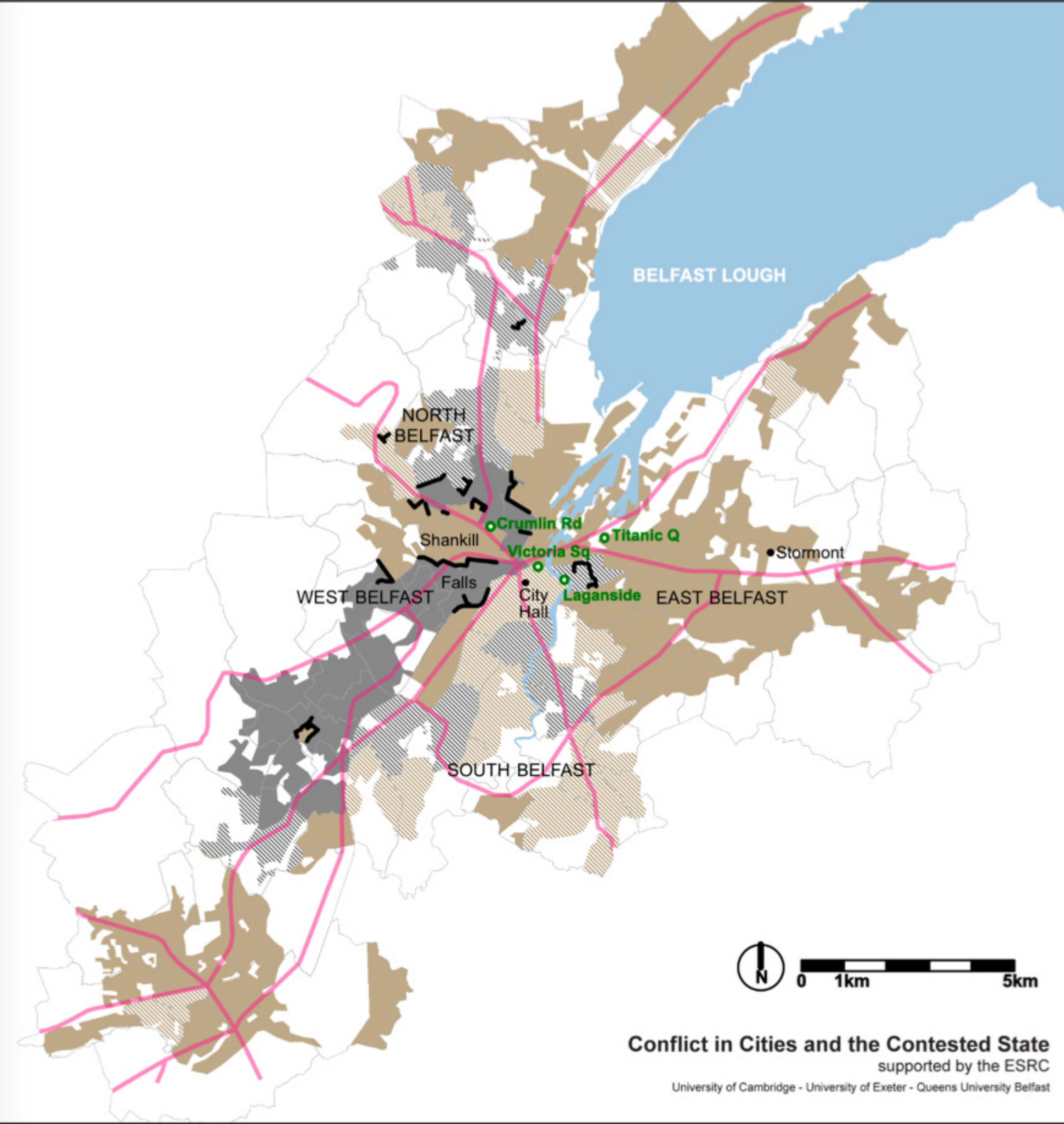


Changes in the built environment in Belfast in the past decade are reproducing, challenging and generally interacting with 'ethno-national' conflict and divisions in the city. Urban regeneration is taking place against the background of political, economic and cultural transition in Belfast and the region. In terms of ethno-national divisions, the transformation of the built environment of the city reveals a constant struggle between preservation and reconfiguration of both physical and social boundaries, a struggle between continuity and change reflected in the photos and interview excerpts below.

Belfast Urban Area

KEY

-  Catholic (over 80%) Built-up Areas
-  Protestant (over 80%) Built-up Areas
-  Catholic (over 50%) Built-up Areas
-  Protestant (over 50%) Built-up Areas
-  'Peacelines'
-  Selected Roads
-  Selected Regeneration Sites
-  Ward Boundaries in Urban Area



'...[A]nybody who has lived in Belfast for a long time will know that people are born in different hospitals and buried in different graveyards. We even have separate dole offices...



...People think that we've got peace. We don't have peace. We have an absence of violence...



Donna Worby

...Most people are living in small isolated areas, working class estates, particularly in North Belfast ... [I]t's a patchwork quilt... People in all these areas have not only physical barriers but also barriers in their minds in terms of where they can go and it's about trying to break those down and this is part of the work that we are trying to do... The difficulty in terms of policy is how do we actually get people to have that kind of connectivity with the city centre....



...Sectarian views have been transfused so
it's a question of how we can do that...

Donna Worby



...In saying all of that, things are a lot better. A lot of people are working on these things to do that but we still have issues' (community worker participant in Conflict in Cities Roundtable Discussion, 2008).



'The issue of the future economy is about access and inclusion: people need to be able to access a place at work but they also need to [give up] this notion of the bubble city because it is creating on its own a new set of problems which are particularly about concentrated zones of prosperity but [also] concentrated zones of sectarianism, of deprivation which continue to drive politics' (voluntary sector participant in Conflict in Cities Roundtable Discussion, 2008).



'Research shows that unless there is a fundamental change in government policy over the next fifteen years these areas will be actually more disadvantaged in the next 15 years. Then we are talking about shared space. Well, you know, it's all very fine talking about shared space whenever you've got, you know, a decent job but whenever you are actually struggling to make ends meet, it is much more difficult and also if you are actually being wound up by politicians who are actually having a certain agenda' (community worker participant in Conflict in Cities Roundtable Discussion, 2008).



'They are building a wall between us and them. And also... there is a physical wall for a start, right but also in terms of employment, there is nobody and I repeat – nobody to my knowledge from the Markets area who works in the Gasworks. I think several thousand people have been working there' (interview with a community worker for Conflict in Cities, 2009).



'[F]or us the housing thing is contentious because it's all about territory and you know there's still walls up in North Belfast. [...] It's about fear. From both communities point of view it's about fear. If it was great we would be taking the walls down!' (interview with a community worker for Conflict in Cities, 2008).



'Of the making of plans there is no end because government departments love to do that. When they're faced with a challenge they will draw up a plan. And so there is a plan for the Lower Shankill. There is a plan for the Lower Oldpark. There are strategic regeneration frameworks, we have planners in by the dozen. That's how civil service operates. That's how it slows things down ...



... so I would like to see the day coming fairly soon when politicians will take things by the scruff of the neck and bring some rationale to this process' (interview with local politician for Conflict in Cities, 2008).



'A senior republican in government said to me, you know, "what is your problem like, you are not getting on, we are doing it!" ...

Between 1969 and 1998
117 Residents from
the New Lodge, Carrick Hill
and Newington Areas
were Killed as a direct result
of the Conflict

22 of those were Killed
by State Forces

86 were Killed
by Loyalist Paramilitaries

19 of those who died were
I.R.A Volunteers

... The politicians are thinking that because they are doing things at Stormont then everybody else should be ok ... that the problem has been solved. You know, we've got the blue print but the problem hasn't been solved. The architect might have drawn this up but the difficulty is builders are still on the site and there's a lot of health and safety issues, that need sorting out, you know' (participant in Conflict in Cities Roundtable Discussion, 2008).



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