CinC

CONFLICT IN CITIES AND THE CONTESTED STATE

SHARING SPACE IN DIVIDED CITIES

Jerusalem

Briefing Paper 4
Sharing Space in Divided Cities:
Why everyday activities and mixing in urban spaces matter

People in divided cities often claim that they never mix; nonetheless, Conflict in Cities (CinC) has found that in the course of daily life, space is often shared more than residents realise. Spaces examined by the project show social relations that we may otherwise not be aware of or think about very much. These create room for unexpected or surprising encounters, and illustrate both the potential and challenges of having a less segregated city.

In some cities with hard borders, breaking down segregation may be impossible. And even if the physical conditions permit, some people may not mix due to their personal or political convictions. In contested cities people from different communities have motivations for sharing spaces that often are not related to a desire for integration. Instead, sharing may be dependent upon practical concerns such as transport or shopping, reflecting a range of attitudes that forms a 'spectrum of shared spaces'. In times of strife, shared space may host

clashes. But it is important to keep in mind that tensions can rise and fall, sometimes unexpectedly, and that areas of shared use are often affected more than others. Sharing space may simply mean that people from either side of ethno-national or religious divides get to see others, observe their customs, and hear their languages as they go about their lives. Slight as such contact may seem, its absence can mean a reduced potential for improving relations in the future. Long-term vision is important in ethno-national conflicts that are particularly enduring. Policy makers must therefore understand people's use of space in the context of urban political economies, labour markets, city governance, planning, education and health; all determine the nature and extent of sharing.

Commerce, culture and services

People's motivations for sharing space can be spontaneous, pragmatic, or intentional, and sharing can
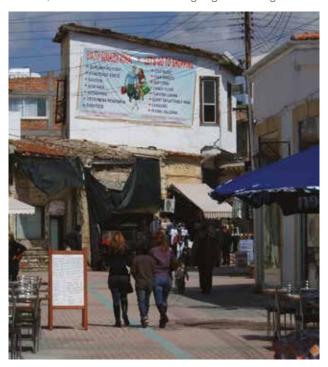
Key findings for policy

- In divided cities, urban planners and relevant organisations must ensure that fragile social arrangements that encourage mixing are not disrupted by the imposition of barriers.

- Basic sharing of space may depend on people having mundane reasons to be together, such as shopping, work and the use of health care facilities.

- Urban public places are essential for shared space, and the location and nature of commercial centres and services is a key consideration.

- The globalised and neutral nature of urban spaces such as shopping malls can sometimes help to dilute conflict and encourage interaction. However, the associated interests of privatisation may also conceal and sustain less visible social inequalities with long-term consequences.

- Common identities, such as those based on occupation or class, can help to see otherwise divided communities live side-by-side.

take place at many levels including shopping, the accessing of services such as education and health care, and cultural events and entertainment. In cities with extreme levels of conflict, residents consciously decide whether to mix, and the routes they take and places they visit are very considered. At times of violent unrest it may be unwise to cross boundaries at all.

In contested cities, commercial areas – from markets to shopping malls – may be shared. Malls tend to neutralise difference, in that the global brands and universal commercial language to be found there are usually not associated with one side or the other. Whilst a greater proliferation of malls may not be the answer, it is worthwhile to extrapolate from this why people in divided cities use them. In Nicosia, many Turkish-Cypriots come to the Greek-Cypriot side of the old city to shop for goods that are unavailable in the north or are cheaper, and to purchase global brands. Similarly, in Jerusalem, Palestinians shop or spend time at the Mamilla shopping area – partly due to the fact that it is a mall with global brands, but also because most signage is in English and

After Nicosia's Ledra/Lokmaci Street crossing reopened in 2008, the banner on the Turkish-Cypriot side that had previously called out to the 'wall of shame' now invited Greek-Cypriots to cross the Buffer Zone with the beckoning greeting of: 'Let's go to shopping'.
Significantly the banner is printed in English and Greek, calling out to both the international tourist trade (one cannot fly direct to Northern Cyprus, except from Turkey) as well as Greek-Cypriots.

consequently the environment is less 'Israeli' or 'Palestinian'. People from all sides of the divide will feel more comfortable visiting places where security checks are directed at all shoppers, rather than at a specific group.

Regenerated city centre areas can provide spaces accessible to all of the city's populations. In Jerusalem, the popularity of the Mamilla mall has surprised many. Belfast's city centre has become a focus for cultural events, festivals and celebrations, and expanded retail development. Nonetheless, aspects of such places themselves, and the political climate of the city, can place limits on inclusion. In Beirut the territorial demarcation of neighbourhoods has seen the development of communally distinctive centres across the city, whilst in Vukovar regeneration efforts have seen public spaces redefined to create a homogenous 'Croatian' city. Perhaps more subtly, whilst privatisation softens some inequalities it can reinforce others. In Jerusalem, Palestinians generally shop in Israeli malls, and work for Israeli employers. Such arrangements do not necessarily reflect Palestinian choice but rather Israeli policies that leave them with few alternatives. Such 'neutralisation' can be coercive. In Jerusalem, some Hebrew-speaking Palestinian workers disguise their identities so that Israelis will not recognise them as Palestinians. It seems to be a deception that Israelis prefer, whilst Palestinians do it because they need their salaries.

Shared but unequal

In Jerusalem, the presence of Palestinians in the Israeli settlement of French Hill is due in part to the location of shops and services that serve both Jewish inhabitants and Palestinian customers from nearby neighbourhoods. One of the main reasons for Palestinians crossing the boundary between East and West Jerusalem is essentially pragmatic, reflecting the unequal distribution of infrastructure and services between the two communities. The Hebrew University campus attracts Palestinian students (mainly Israeli citizens) to rent accommodation in French Hill, with some mixing between the groups. A recent and striking housing phenomenon in Jerusalem involves the 'immigration' of upper-middle class Palestinians, many of them Israeli citizens, into Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem. Again, they have moved there for better housing and

> **"Like years ago when you used to go in [to the city centre] you used to be afraid of Catholics knowing that you were a Protestant, or if you were walking into the town across the bridge there, if you were on the left hand side of the road then the Catholics on the other side knew you were a Protestant and you'd be crapping yourself ... but now it just doesn't bother me at all."**
> *- Young Protestant woman in Belfast*

municipal services, although for some there is the sense of beating the system and for others a form of reversed colonialism in this act of settlement.

How people share space

In contested cities people from different communities have motivations for sharing spaces that often are not related to a desire to foster togetherness or diversity. Rather, ease of access is a key consideration, whilst expectations concerning the sharing of public space might be understood as spread along a spectrum of attitudes (for example, toleration, indifference, interaction), all of which are important. CinC research has identified a range of possibilities.

Palestinians residing in French Hill generally do not socialise with their Jewish Israeli neighbours or send their children to the local Hebrew-language school. However, public and commercial facilities are shared to some extent and, at a minimal level, so are experiences of the neighbourhood. These two groups are remarkably similar economically and professionally, if not politically. We might ask whether, ultimately, such similarities could help to form a quiet if not friendly sharing of the neighbourhood.

Evidence from Berlin offers a nuanced and dynamic account of the factors that attend the sharing of space subsequent to reunification. In cases where there were existing family ties, contact was often maintained between East and West Germans prior to reunification.

Where this prior exposure existed, East Berliners felt more comfortable using parts of West Berlin and welcoming West Germans into their own circles. Employment was also a great motivator for encouraging East Berliners to cross the former border. Thus, interaction appears to be conditioned by the memory of sharing and personal relations, as well as more functional considerations. People who are afraid or distrustful of each other need practical reasons to mix at even the most minimal levels. On the other hand, mixing can also be limited by pragmatic considerations. In Belfast, the city centre is only marginally significant in the everyday lives of mothers from segregated and socially deprived neighbourhoods due to lack of economic resources and the difficulties in transporting young children to the area.

Sometimes quite distinctive activities and priorities lead to sharing of space, with Jerusalem's Damascus Gate a good example. Here, most interaction is minimal, stressful, and sometimes violent, with Israeli soldiers doing spot checks on Palestinians. But on Fridays before sunset, just as Palestinian commercial activity begins to wane, Orthodox Jews enter this gate on their way to pray at the Western Wall. There are no cordial relations, but

Timetable for Mass in French and Flemish. Church at the border between the Brussels Capital Region and Flanders.

over many years the joint use of the same space has become ingrained and to some extent normalised.

The rise and fall of tensions

The degree to which spaces are shared can reflect the level of tension in the city and can change rapidly. With a reduction in tensions in Jerusalem, secular Israelis have ventured back into the Old City. At a junction on the Via Dolorosa one very popular café run by Europeans is frequented by all. A combination of foreigners and Christian sites may make the area feel less threatening for Israelis, and with a frequent army presence, the junction is seen as secure. However, whatever security the army gives Israelis it takes away from Palestinians. In segregated Belfast neighbourhoods the political mood of the city can be indicated by the willingness of working class mothers to walk down a street previously avoided, say hello at nursery, meet in cross-community groups, or just be in the same shopping centre. A lessening of tensions corresponds with an emerging civility in how women undertake such activities. While ethno-national concerns are not absent for young people in Belfast, some youth now generally regard the city centre, when it is not disrupted by marches, as shared or neutral space.

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Investigators
Dr Wendy Pullan, Cambridge
Prof James Anderson, QUB
Prof Mick Dumper, Exeter
Prof Liam O'Dowd, QUB

Partners
Dr Katy Hayward, QUB
Dr Craig Larkin, King's College London
Prof Madeleine Leonard, QUB
Dr Rami Nasrallah, IPCC Jerusalem
Dr Karl O'Connor, Limerick
Dr Lisa Smyth, QUB
Dr Maximilian Sternberg, Cambridge
Dr Yair Wallach, SOAS
Dr Haim Yacobi, Ben Gurion University

Researchers
Dr Britt Baillie, Cambridge
Dr Anita Bakshi, Cambridge
Nadera Karkaby-Patel, Cambridge
Lefkos Kyriacou, Cambridge
Dr Milena Komarova, QUB
Razan Makhlouf, Exeter
Dr Martina McKnight, QUB

PhD Students
Giulia Carabelli, QUB
Monika Halkort, QUB
Konstantin Kastrissianakis, Cambridge
Linda Rootamm, QUB
Kelsey Shanks, Exeter

ESRC ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL | UNIVERSITY OF EXETER | Queen's University Belfast | UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE | ARUP