

Miss Drake ¹⁸⁷⁵ 17 MAY 1993
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Noelue

Many thanks

misses. I attach

x a copy of Mr Mc Fivans' speech
which he sent me.



cc. Mr McCormick
Mr Rodgers
Mr Boyd

Mr Hamilton

27 APR 1993

12/87

MA
14/5

PLANNING AND SECTARIAN SPACE

P.S. This will be one of the major
errors for 1993/4 &

1. I attended a seminar on planning and sectarian space organised by the Centre for Policy Research, University of Ulster. The following were the main points of interest.

Raymond.

Problem Context

2. Professor Fred Boal (QUB) suggested that one way of analysing the problem was using the framework of "territoriality" ie the behavioural phenomena associated with demarcated space. He stated that Belfast's 13 peace walls had been inserted into pre-existing fault lines in the community - they had not created the divisions but were a manifestation of those divisions built by the community and later "adopted" by Government and NIHE. Territorial behaviour was most obviously manifest in working class areas, usually as a response to a threat (real or perceived) and as a means of preserving the group culture and of controlling relationships/contacts.
3. Interestingly Professor Boal used Cooper Street as an example of sectarian division in Belfast. With the aid of maps he was able to show how as far back as the 1880's the ethnic structuring of West Belfast was already in place. His conclusion was that the peace lines encapsulated wider conflicts in NI and could only come down (as in East Germany) when attitudes and behaviour changed and there was a will to remove them. Opening the barriers prematurely was a precursor to invasion and conflict. Good fences in this case made if not good neighbours at least more secure ones.

Policy Responses

4. Dr Brendan Murtagh (UU and a former NIHE employee) considered allegations that security force objectives dominated policy responses through the NIO manipulating population movements, through the security forces influencing the design and layout of new housing and through key planning decisions being dictated by larger political concerns.
5. In relation to the first allegation that since the security forces found it easier to police segregated areas this was a policy aim, Dr Murtagh said that he could not find evidence of 'hidden planners'

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engaged in ethnic engineering and used the example of the investment made by NIHE in the mixed Suffolk Estate to disprove this theory. Neither could Dr Murtagh find evidence of the security forces influencing design and layout for example in the Short Strand where he concluded that the Roads Service and development objectives rather than the security forces dictated the layout. There was no evidence either to suggest that planning policy was linked with security objectives in for example the decision to demolish Unity Flats or establish comprehensive redevelopment areas in North Belfast.

6. Dr Murtagh concluded by calling for a more co-ordinated planning approach with an emphasis on community relations and (predictably perhaps) further survey work and ethnographical research.

The Housing Executive Perspective

7. Billy McGivern (NIHE) gave an interesting and pragmatic resumé (drawing material from 'Building a Better Belfast') of the background to the problems faced by NIHE in meeting the housing needs of an expanding RC population who wanted to remain in perceived safe areas in Belfast and who could not be rehoused in properties left vacant by Protestants moving out to satellite towns. He stressed that NIHE did not build peace lines nor did it engage in social engineering or in negotiation with the security forces on housing design. The Housing Selection Scheme was based on choice and need and NIHE would neither seek to demolish peace lines or force people to live where they did not wish to do so.

The Community Relations Council (CRC) Approach

8. Mr Will Glendinning (CRC) outlined the work of CRC in "mixed" communities such as the Ballynafeigh area of Belfast. The main thrust of his presentation appeared to be an appeal for land use strategy to take account of the effects on community relations with the aim of maintaining mixed areas.

The American Experience

9. Moyra Duggan baffled and entertained many of the delegates (myself included) with an exposé of a paradigm of conflict and using the case study of the Mount Pleasant area, Washington, explored possible peace making and conflict resolution strategies. Frankly none of the strategies appeared to offer any new approach which could be adopted in Belfast.

Conclusion

10. In the open forum Dave Singleton (QUB) suggested that Belfast was a classic case of planning drift with no strategic planning (he referred





to planners as footsoldiers armed with elastoplast). However he felt that we were condemned to planning drift until there was a will to remove the barriers (both physical and cultural). In discussion Mr McGivern suggested that some strategic planning decisions such as the Matthew Stop Line had themselves created problems rather than providing solutions. Professor Boal suggested that the aspirations of the two communities were very different depending on whether they formed the majority or minority population in a particular areas. Brendan Murtagh suggested that a more modest co-ordinated project-based approach was preferable in the circumstances to strategic planning. The seminar concluded lyrically with some verses from Seamus Heaney on the intractable nature of the problems.

C. D. Doake

C D DOAKE
27 April 1993

