

The Environment on Our Doorsteps: Community Restorative Justice and the Roots of
Sustainability

by

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Abstract

The leading paradigms of sustainability are fraught with tremendous shortcomings and ambiguities in relation to both peace and justice, and lack any significant discourse on the necessity of radically transforming our political institutions to incorporate sustainability issues into the development agenda. In an effort to address these shortcomings, a new paradigm called *just sustainability* has emerged. Just sustainability is an approach that recognizes the inseparable nature of social and environmental justice and sustainability, and pushes for organizations and governmental institutions to become more aware of the relationships that exist between inequality, injustice and environmentally unsustainable practices (Agyeman 2005). This study provides a critical assessment of Community Restorative Justice (CRJ), a grassroots, community-based initiative in the north of Ireland dedicated to creating change through an empowering, participatory process to build a just community that is tolerant, responsive, and inclusive.

Restorative justice is a response to crime and anti-social behavior that is “aimed at repairing the harm caused by a criminal act and restoring the balance in the community affected by the criminal act” (Government of British Columbia 2006); central to many restorative justice programs—CRJ included—is the idea that crimes are committed against individuals or communities as opposed to the state. Since its creation in 1996, CRJ has come to play an integral role in the continuing Irish peace process, as it provides alternatives to punishment violence through its conflict mediation and education services and stresses above all else that those most affected should have the opportunity to participate in the regenerative process.

Until recently, few scholars have thought to emphasize the roles that peace and justice can play as strategies in a sustainable development framework, let alone the contributions that an organization such as CRJ can make to both the environmental justice movement and broader struggles for social and economic equality. This paper seeks to demonstrate how the work of CRJ and its place within the greater West Belfast community contribute to a more solid foundation for just sustainable development through efforts toward local decision-making, participation and empowerment, and the reclamation of community/sovereignty; the reconfiguration of relationships within communities and between different levels of government; and the connections between violence, inequality, quality of life, and community development.

The assessment of CRJ and its place within the context of just sustainability will provide an alternative conceptualization of the connection between issues of human security, development, and environmental justice. The analysis of this integrated approach can be applied to both the current sustainability discourse, as well as current grassroots activist efforts to create more creative, proactive, and effective strategies that are holistic in nature and recognize the critical links between economic opportunity, social welfare, and quality of life.

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Introduction: The environment at our doorstep

Policing, justice, and quality of life in the north of Ireland

“The British government were found guilty in the European Court of Human Rights for torturing me. They used the same techniques as the Americans are using in Abu Ghraib prison today, and the people who carried those acts out on behalf of the British government were policemen. I don’t know if any of those people who carried that out are now senior people in the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). So there needs to be a resolution of the past wrong-doings of the police. In terms of the work I presently do, it is very clear there needs to be a civil police service that is working for a safer community and that is prepared to work alongside the community to create a safer place for me, my family, and my community to live in” (qtd. in McCarney).

It was with mixed emotions that Jim Auld spoke of his feelings on whether Irish republican political party Sinn Féin should give their support to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in order to move closer to a power-sharing government in the north of Ireland. Auld is the director of Community Restorative Justice, a community-based mediation and conflict resolution initiative headquartered in Andersonstown, West Belfast. While hundreds of men were rounded up and imprisoned when Britain reinstated its internment policyⁱ in 1971, Auld was one of 14 so-called “hooded men” who were subjected to various forms of sensory deprivation and torture by the British security forces for days after their arrest. None were ever charged with committing any crime (Conroy 7).

Auld’s voice is only one amongst many who expressed concern in 2007 about how far the police service had come over the past thirty-six years, and whether it was in the best interests of the nationalistⁱⁱ people to support the police before they had been shown to be accountable to all the communities they are purported to serve. In the course of the Irish peace process, few decisions have been as contentious, as divisive, and as integral to the devolutionⁱⁱⁱ of the political institutions as the move towards the acceptance of policing by the nationalist community in the Six Counties. To make such a decision would require nationalists to put the peace process before their own personal or community experience, wrote Jim Gibney in the *Irish News*. In late December of 2006,

Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams called for a special *ard fheis* (meeting) to debate the party's stance on policing, the first step towards a future acceptance of the PSNI. "Of all the decisions republicans have taken over the last decade of the peace process this one tugged at every republican^{iv} fibre, at the core of what it means to be an Irish republican," Gibney wrote shortly after the announcement was made.

What made the decision so contrary to core republican values was the fact that Catholic, nationalist/republican communities have been without an acceptable police force for the past 35 or 40 years. British state forces have been at the forefront of ensuring the continuing dominance of the unionist^v majority at the expense of the minority, and their actions were focused on guaranteeing Catholics accepted that dominance and did not rebel. It was the criminal justice system that ensured that acceptance—or at least their new place in the unionist state, explains Harry McGuire, the head of training at Community Restorative Justice. When the late 1960s saw a widespread mobilization of civil rights activists take to the streets to demand justice and equality for Catholics, protestors in the north of Ireland were met with force. "It was the local police that were using the force," remembers McGuire. "People who were protesting in a peaceful way were literally beaten off the streets in a very brutal manner" (Maguire, "An Introduction").

The British government eventually responded to the growing disorder on the streets by sending military troops to take over a policing role in 1969 (Ellison and Smyth 72). The police were completely withdrawn, and the British army then performed its military role. McGuire explains, "From 1969 until about 1976, there was no police presence in communities like the one we're in today—in working class, nationalist-republican communities. Policing for all intents and purposes then slipped off the agenda" (Maguire, "An Introduction").

Within the nationalist, working class communities, however, locals were still in need of some form of policing to deal with crime and anti-social behavior. The absence of a legitimate policing service did not mean that there was an absence of crime. As a result, they turned to informal structures that were beginning to develop in the community. Citizens sought guidance from paramilitary groups like the Irish Republican Army (IRA), who had come to be regarded as protectors of the community; though the

IRA did not see themselves as a police service and did not have the much-needed resources, the policing role would later fall to them out of necessity (Maguire, “An Introduction”). The initial reluctance on the part of the IRA soon gave way to community pressure. The IRA saw themselves as a guerrilla movement, but given the political and military context of the time, they were forced to deal with community policing (Liam Stone).

The system of reliance on armed groups like the IRA to mete out community justice took hold. McGuire explains what that entailed: “At its softest end, it would have been about communicating with people and trying to find local resolutions to local issues. At the sharpest end, it was about shooting people...kneecapping, punishment violence, expulsion, and in some cases, execution for acts that were taking place within the community” (Maguire, “An Introduction”).

Environmentalism, sustainable development and the gap between rhetoric and reality

Author Ken Warpole (1998) discusses the danger society faces by not bridging the divide between social and environmental politics, as a marriage of the two is essential to the realization of truly sustainable development. Mainstream environmental policy, he argues, is shortsighted, focusing primarily on rural concerns like the food production system, animal rights, and preserving green space. Issues of urban concern are not addressed in green politics. Though, as Warpole points out, poverty and sustainability are incompatible, mainstream environmentalism fails to meet the challenge of issues such as homelessness, employment, public health, adequate housing, and greater equity and security—even though all of these issues surely contribute just as much, if not more so, to one’s quality of life as the “green issues” (151).

Warpole’s study of bottle banks at Camberwell Green, a small slice of urban green space in inner city London, confirmed his belief in the gap between professional and popular/citizen conceptions of “the environment.” His survey of more than 10,000 people found that most referred “to the cleanliness of the local streets, the lack of vandalism, the well-kept schools, shops and parks, a low crime rate and its sense of neighborliness—a very different definition from that used by ecologists, environmental activists and academics interested in green issues” (149). That gap, Warpole reasons, is reflected in

the divide between social and ecological concerns, and further, in the way that people conceive of society and nature as separate. In an attempt to bridge this divide, Warpole calls for the elaboration of a new urban environmental politics that:

...starts from the social needs and understandings of communities, and their assured desire to create better places in which to live (and raise families if they so wish), and which then works outwards to the wider understandings of environmental issues which currently make up the green agenda (151).

Both the gap between activist/academic rhetoric and reality/lived experience described above, and the prioritization of the physical environment over social and community needs are reflected in the leading paradigms of sustainability. Laden with tremendous shortcomings and ambiguities in relation to both peace and justice, they lack significant discourse on the necessity of community interest and participation and the necessity of radically transforming political institutions to incorporate sustainability issues into the development agenda. In an effort to address these shortcomings, a new paradigm called *just sustainability* has emerged. Just sustainability is an approach that recognizes the inseparable nature of social and environmental justice and sustainability, and pushes for organizations and governmental institutions to become more aware of the relationships that exist between inequality, injustice and environmentally unsustainable practices (Agyeman 5). Central to the theory of just sustainability is the necessity to “look holistically at the human condition”; rather than concentrate on piecemeal approaches, as is the environmental movement norm, one must look for connected strategies and solutions to enviro-social problems (Agyeman 7).

Restorative justice, sustainability and the Irish peace process

Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJ) was created in 1996 by a group of concerned community activists, academics, and criminal justice practitioners in an effort to establish a grassroots alternative to paramilitary punishment violence. Restorative justice is a response to crime and anti-social behavior that prioritizes the healing of victims, the accountability of perpetrators and the active participation of community members in the creation of safe and healthy communities over the adversarial, retributive tendencies of the traditional criminal justice system (“Restorative”). Central to many restorative justice programs—CRJ included—is the idea that crimes are committed

against individuals or communities as opposed to the state. Since its creation in 1996, CRJ has come to play an integral role in the continuing Irish peace process, as it provides alternatives to punishment violence through its conflict mediation and education services and stresses above all else that those most affected should have the opportunity to participate in the regenerative process.

The establishment of programs like CRJ is part of a larger pattern of groups historically oppressed by the state that have been forced to organize their own community-based justice schemes outside of traditional criminal justice systems. Native American activist and scholar Andrea Smith describes the reasoning behind Native peoples' use of restorative justice schemes which are not dependent on the state:

There is a contradiction...in relying upon the state to solve problems it is responsible for creating. Native people are per capita the most arrested, most incarcerated, and most victimized by police brutality of any ethnic group in the country. Given the oppression Native people face within the criminal justice system, many communities are developing their own programs for addressing criminal behavior, which often draw on some of the principles of restorative justice (139).

Using the criminal justice system as the primary means through which to address violence in Native communities, explains Smith, does not address the reality of police and state violence that these communities face on a daily basis (144). It is important to note the shared experience of arrest, abuse, mass incarceration, and victimization on behalf of both Native communities in North America and nationalist communities in the north of Ireland. Native communities are but one example of the many groups who are developing restorative justice schemes as alternatives to the failure of state-sponsored, traditional criminal justice.

Until recently, few scholars have thought to emphasize the roles that peace and justice can play as strategies in a sustainable development framework, let alone the contributions that an organization such as CRJ can make to both the environmental justice movement and broader struggles for social and economic equality. This thesis seeks to demonstrate how the work of CRJ contributes to a more solid foundation for just sustainable development within the greater West Belfast community through efforts toward local decision-making, participation and empowerment, and the reclamation of community/sovereignty; the reconfiguration of relationships within communities and

between different levels of government; and the connections between violence, inequality, quality of life, and community development.

Citizen empowerment in a post-conflict community

As the north of Ireland moves forward in its transition from an armed conflict to a peace process, the number of community-based initiatives in West Belfast that provide much-needed services continues to grow. Madeleine Leonard's research into the relationship between economic disadvantage and social capital highlights the uniqueness of the West Belfast community. Writes Leonard, "Catholic West Belfast is a vibrant area boasting strong community networks and a self-help ethos. These networks are partly a response to decades of economic and social disadvantage resulting from political discrimination and the suppression of cultural identity (931)". Here, local citizens participate in a realm of social and economic support services ordinarily allocated by the state.

The United Nations Commission on Human Security stresses the role that citizen empowerment plays in the development of a society that embraces human rights, access to education, freedom from want and fear, and the ability to look forward to the inheritance of a healthy environment. "Human security must...aim at developing the capabilities of individuals and communities to make informed choices and to act on behalf of causes and interests in many spheres of life. That is why human security starts from the recognition that people are the most active participants in determining their well-being. It builds on people's efforts, strengthening what they do for themselves," writes former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in *Human Security Now* (4).

Human security ties together the UN's primary interests of peace, security and development and necessitates an integrated approach. Nowhere is this more important than in post-conflict societies, as communities in transition continue to experience deprivation, unequal treatment, and other insecurities as they look to the change that the future brings. Areas like these demand a delicate balance of strategies to both empower citizens and protect them from harm; to focus on peace, development, or the environment to the exclusion of the other would be courting unsustainability. According to the UN Commission on Human Security, each activity must "build on the efforts and capabilities of those directly affected" (11-12).

The city of West Belfast in the north of Ireland is an example of a post-conflict citizenry struggling to create a safe and sustainable community in the wake of the most recent manifestation of a centuries-old war against British colonialism. Here, in this predominantly Catholic, nationalist, working class community, it is the dedication, the enthusiasm, and the spirit of the local people that determine the success of community-driven projects (qtd. in McEvoy and Mika 551). *The Northern Ireland Communities Crime Survey* found that the areas with the highest crime rates and highest levels of socio-economic deprivation also have high levels of citizen engagement in community activities; the same survey found that residents of “Catholic lower working-class areas were most likely to say their community was a place where people helped each other” (qtd. in McEvoy and Mika 549). It is no surprise then, to hear the north of Ireland characterized as having the most diverse and active community sector in the entire United Kingdom (qtd. in McEvoy and Mika 549).

In a statement that echoes the sentiment of the UN Commission on Human Security, the authors of the survey argue that it is essential to develop an understanding of a community’s environment that incorporates the whole gamut of experiences the residents may be exposed to—from poverty and unemployment to physical living conditions to experiences with crime and policing (O’Mahoney, Geary, McEvoy, and Johnson 32-33). It is imperative that researchers develop that understanding from the peoples’ own lived experience; those most affected are the best placed to identify and implement solutions to the problems in their community. Creative, sustainable change can only be made in an environment where people have the ability to develop alternatives that are built on foundations of solidarity and a commitment to create a better world. “Development,” write the members of the Human Security Commission, “advances freedom when it enhances people’s capabilities and choices so that they can participate actively in all spheres of life” (131).

Years of experience have taught the residents of nationalist West Belfast to rely on the strengths and commitment of their own community activists to get the job done, and in the years since the paramilitaries’ cease-fires, numbers of grassroots organizations dedicated to neighborhood renewal projects have risen from the ground up, stressing a community-wide vision and a “long-term, people-centered regeneration strategy” (Power

2). Father Des Wilson, a priest and community activist in Ballymurphy, West Belfast, recalls how the residents of his working class community began to make their voices heard in the 1970s:

As local people began to take a direct interest in other aspects of their lives—politics, planning, etc—the people who were in charge of such things were resentful that ‘ordinary’ people should be demanding an input. When community groups began to emerge in greater numbers political leaders made it clear that they felt such groups should simply be conduits to pass on to the people the decisions made by those in authority. However, local communities were beginning to demand far more than that. Indeed, an increasing number of people felt that local communities should be involved in the continual creation of *alternative* arrangements: for theatre, education, policing, cultural events and recreation...whatever. And right through that whole period you find this pattern—a desire to create alternatives (qtd. in Hall 8).

CRJ and the “process which leads to peace”

To Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams—himself a victim of police and paramilitary violence—and his supporters, the decision to endorse policing is part and parcel of a long-term strategy for the party’s participation in government. “Be sure of this, getting our strategy right on this is inevitably bound up with how we move forward beyond partition to the Republic,” Adams told a crowd gathered for a republican commemoration in advance of the historic vote. “We do well to remember that struggles cannot be won without the support of people, and a huge battle for hearts and minds is still to be waged, to mobilise greater levels of popular support behind republican aims and objectives. There are no short cuts to independence and a new Ireland” (“Adams urges”).

Though most of the residents of West Belfast look forward to a future 32-county Ireland, the true battle for hearts and minds is still fought on the ground, in the community. The true litmus test for local people is quality of life; community organizations will continue to drive the peace process on the ground regardless of whether or not Stormont^{vi} is up and running—for it is only the *process* itself which can truly build peace, confidence, and community capacity. This assessment of CRJ, the restorative justice process and its place within the context of peace and justice in Ireland will provide an alternative conceptualization of the connection between issues of human security, sustainable development, and environmental justice. The analysis of this integrated approach can be applied to the current sustainability discourse, as well as

current grassroots activist efforts to develop more creative, proactive, and effective strategies that are holistic in nature and recognize the critical links between economic opportunity, social welfare, development and quality of life.

Methodology

This study seeks to address the theories outlined above through the qualitative analysis of field interviews conducted in Belfast, and an extensive literature review of issues of sustainable development, environmental justice, and issues related to the political, social and economic development of the North of Ireland.

The majority of the field interviews were carried out in July and August of 2006, with some additional interviews conducted in May 2007 and August 2009. A preliminary visit was made in December 2005 to discuss research plans with representatives of Community Restorative Justice. Recognizing the important benefits that would be accrued from doing on-site research, I was based in West Belfast for each trip. Residing within the community allowed me to interact with and build relationships with local people, benefit from local community networks, and explore local issues in depth.

Interviews were conducted with an assortment of community activists working on a variety of social and economic justice issues, local political representatives, and members and clients of CRJ. A list of general questions was developed to use as a guide. These questions were later tailored to fit the position of the person being interviewed. This flexible interview format allowed me to ask probative questions and to respond constructively to the information offered by the interviewee.

The initial data collection was based on personal investigation and my knowledge of community groups and group formation post-1994 cease-fire. Periodic consultations with a local then-city councilor, Tom Hartley, from the Lower Falls area of West Belfast provided a wealth of local community contacts that proved invaluable to me.

A total of ___ interviews were conducted (see interview schedule, Appendix A). Efforts were made to record each interview; however in a few cases this was not possible due to technological constraints. All recorded interviews were later transcribed. Interviewees were asked to sign consent forms for both the interview itself and the recording. Detailed notes were taken in those cases where interviews could not be

recorded.

A literature review of primary and secondary sources complemented the field interviews. A broad spectrum of sources were consulted for content analysis and critical review, from academic journals and books to the publications of non-profits and community groups and political party policy documents.

The on-site interviews, however, were the most important element of this study. In order to incorporate a range of perspectives of community life and citizen empowerment, an assortment of community workers from a variety of organizations that worked in a number of different fields were interviewed. Many of those were either ex-prisoners or had family members who were imprisoned or who were killed during the course of the conflict; this is mentioned where applicable. I also conducted an interview with a restorative justice organization serving the loyalist/unionist community for the purposes of providing a contrast with an organization from “the other side” that worked with the police. These field interviews were imperative to gain an understanding of citizens’ perspectives on the community organizing context and success of CRJ, as well as local community definitions of environment, community, development, peace and justice.

One book in particular was quite useful for the initial preparation necessary prior to conducting the field interviews: Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide by Donald A. Ritchie. My decision to focus on community activists’ own perspectives was based on the belief that using people’s histories and personal experiences is the most appropriate way to provide local information from an outsider’s perspective. Oral histories were combined with analysis to answer questions and offer commentary and perspective on the main themes and arguments presented in this thesis. It is my intention to present larger enviro-social concepts and link them with local issues and perspectives of community members in their own words.

This study is meant to challenge mainstream, conventional academic/”green” environmentalist definitions of “environment” and “sustainability.” It is my hope that this study will serve to encourage an open forum for discussion and exchange of ideas on the environmental issues confronting the urban working-class, what it means for community development to be truly just and sustainable, and the relationship between peace, justice, people and the environment.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one provides a brief, historical context of inequality in West Belfast, beginning with a historical discussion of the political conflict and extending to the present context of economic disadvantage and community organizing within the nationalist community in this part of the city. Chapter two focuses on the limitations of the current environmental, environmental justice and sustainability discourses, and highlights the role that incorporating peace, justice, participation and empowerment can play in the future development of those discourses. Chapter three provides an overview of sustainable development strategy on the island of Ireland, with a brief discussion of how the sustainable development agenda is supported at the government and institutional levels. This chapter also explores the relationship between citizen empowerment and just sustainability, and the role that an organization like CRJ can play in furthering urban environmental and sustainability goals. Chapter four focuses on the formation of Community Restorative Justice Ireland, with an emphasis on how restorative justice work in the community contributes to citizen empowerment, local peace-building, and sustainable development in West Belfast. Finally, the conclusion provides an overview of recent political change in the north of Ireland and reinforces the need for an alternative vision for the future of the environmental/sustainability debate.

ⁱ The policy of internment without trial was introduced on August 9, 1971, and empowered the British security forces to make sweeping arrests without evidence or charge of any crime and hold them for an indefinite period of time. 342 people—all Catholic—were arrested on that date, the majority of whom were not involved in any paramilitary activity.

ⁱⁱ In the Irish context, the term “nationalist” is commonly used to refer to those who support Ireland’s independence from Britain, with the future goal of a united, 32 county Ireland. Generally speaking, nationalists in the north tend to be Catholic, and the terms are often used interchangeably when used in a political context.

ⁱⁱⁱ The term “devolution” used here refers to the transfer of governmental authority from Westminster in London to the Northern Ireland Executive in Belfast.

^{iv} The term “republican” used in an Irish political context is commonly used to refer to someone who as either involved in or supported the Irish Republican Army’s armed struggle for independence from Britain. The terms “republican” and “nationalist” are often used interchangeably, even though not all nationalists may have supported the armed struggle.

^v The term “unionist” is commonly used to refer to those who support the Northern Ireland state’s union with Great Britain. Generally speaking, unionists in the north tend to be Protestant. The term “loyalist” is used to describe the largely Protestant paramilitary groups who support ties with the UK.

^{vi} “Stormont” is the colloquial term for the Northern Ireland Assembly’s Parliament buildings, located in east Belfast.

Chapter One: Belfast: “the city at the heart of the conflict”

Located on the northeastern coast of the island of Ireland in the province of Ulster, Belfast is the capital city of the Northern Ireland state, and the second largest city in Ireland. According to the 2006 mid-year estimates, Belfast has a population of 267,374 within the city limits, with a total of 645,536 living within the greater metropolitan area (“Belfast demographics”). The population of Belfast peaked at the beginning of the political conflict at around 600,000 (in the Belfast Urban Area, as compared to the current figure of 276,459) in the early 1970s, after which many began to move away from the inner city areas and out into the suburbs (Roulston). The city is divided into five parliamentary constituencies: the City Centre, East, West, North and South.

Writes law professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, “Belfast has been a city characterized by all facets of the conflict—intensive sectarian divides, the ghettoisation of communities, extensive destruction of property, daily disputes between the security forces and the nationalist community and heavy militarization” (93). The city experienced disproportionately more lethal force deaths by state agents than any other place in Northern Ireland, with fifty-three percent or 185 fatalities (Ní Aoláin 93). As a result, Ní Aoláin argues, feelings of alienation from the state are more common in certain communities and sections of the city—a reality that led the state to “rebuild its relationships with geographical particularity” (93).

Notwithstanding the recent progress of the peace process, much of the city remains highly segregated; particularly divided are the working-class neighborhoods, where segregation occurs along religious and political lines (Lauber). A system of separation barriers snakes its way through and between Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods in the city—walls that reach to 25 or 30 feet high. Popularly referred to as “peace lines,” these walls were ostensibly built to ease sectarian tensions and minimize violence along Protestant and Catholic community interfaces. The oldest wall in the city dates back to the 1800s, with many erected during the 1920s to prevent outbreaks of violence at the time of the creation of the Northern Ireland state (McCarney, “Behind”). Dr. Pete Shirlow, a professor at Queen’s University Belfast explains the significance of these walls during the most recent phase of the conflict: “When the Troubles began, the boundaries between the communities became crucial as points of defence, or points of

asserting your identity, and the British State and the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) basically echoed those divisions. They put in place the barricades, the boundary markers and the walls that made that sectarian sense of the city” (McCarney, “Behind”).

Again, in spite of recent achievements in the realm of Northern Irish politics, Dr. Shirlow contends that since the 1994 Irish Republican Army (IRA) ceasefire, at least fourteen new walls have been built, and almost every existing wall has been heightened since 1998 (the year the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement was signed). Currently, forty-one walls built by the NIO alone stretch through thirteen miles of the city. Many who live on the interface are forced to confront the threat of sporadic violence in these divided areas and feel that the walls are still necessary for protection, yet more and more community activists have come to believe that they also serve to promote violence. The walls are constant physical reminders of community divisions, and as such they often serve as rallying points for bored, disaffected youth from both communities (McCarney, “Behind”). Shirlow and Murtagh elaborate the significance of the interface walls:

Their existence condenses the performance of violence into distinct space and their locations present a libretto from which community fidelity can be interpreted. Interfaces both annul and confirm intercommunity relationships and constrict space into sites that become obvious places of violent engagement and intercommunity discord (9).

Regardless of one’s position on the present-day necessity of the peace lines, however, most would agree that the walls have been accepted as a part of the city’s landscape, and before they can begin to physically dismantle the walls, residents of both sides must work on dismantling their deep-rooted attitudes and feelings of mistrust towards their neighbors. The high levels of segregation have become so ingrained in the city, and the peace lines such a “natural” part of the landscape (Shirlow and Murtagh 9), that many feel that staying on their side of the divide makes life more comfortable and safe. Journalist David McKittrick calls both the visible and invisible peace lines “daunting barriers to progress in the future” (“Staying”). At this point, navigating through a divided city is second nature to those that live in Belfast—but the implications of the peace lines go well beyond their physical imposition. Argues McKittrick:

The city is criss-crossed with dozens of tall metal and brick peace lines, towering structures erected to keep the two sides apart. Some of them are familiar, having been in place for more than 30 years, unmistakable signs of division. Yet Belfast

society is also fitted with a formidable array of other peace lines which are less conspicuous. They exist in education, leisure, sport and dozens of other facets of life, permeating society and, arguably, constituting a more important division than class. It has long been acknowledged that the cultural cost is high. Now, the financial implications have been laid bare (“Staying”).

A study of the financial cost of the conflict released in August 2007 estimated that the British government continues to spend approximately £1.5 billion to keep the sectarian system going in the divided communities (McKittrick, “£1.5bn”). In addition to the costs one would readily associate with the conflict—such as fees related to the security forces and the net job loss in the area—the study found a number of hidden expenditures connected to the administration of a divided society (McKittrick, “£1.5bn”). For example, much of the staggering figure is associated with the duplication of social services in areas such as housing, health care, and education; upwards of ninety percent of children are educated in separate schools (“The cost”).

In 2007, an editorial in *The Independent* lamented the wasteful spending and urged politicians to evaluate whether current policies may have the unintended consequence of actually prolonging sectarian divisions. It is time, the writer suggested, for residents of Belfast to break the cycle of violence, sectarianism and segregation and move forward, together. Though polls continue to show that residents would like to live closely with those of the other religion, pondered the editor, “the unfortunate practicalities of life in many parts of Belfast, however, can make this extremely difficult” (“The cost”). The walls remain as a daily reminder of the distance these communities will have to travel to become a truly open society.

The existence of the peace lines has also served to exacerbate many of the inequalities present in certain communities, such as the housing shortage in the predominantly Catholic West Belfast. According to Dr. Shirlow, the republican community continues to expand demographically as the loyalist community declines in number; removing the walls would allow for more housing to accommodate this expanding population. Such a maneuver would free up a large amount of space and fulfilling the housing needs of this growing demographic:

West Belfast may be only one quarter of the city, but it is home to approximately a third of its inhabitants, which supports Dr Shirlow’s view that housing is a serious consideration. He notes that a house on the nationalist side of the peace

line will usually cost significantly more than its unionist counterpart, so the peace line also serves to distort the housing market (McCarney, “Behind”).

Unfortunately, the loyalist community is not supportive of an expansion (McCarney, “Behind”).

Of the five parliamentary constituencies in the city, West Belfast has the most extreme levels of segregation—with many neighborhoods upwards of ninety percent Catholic (Doherty and Poole)—and shares the distinction, along with North Belfast and Derry, of being one of Northern Ireland’s areas with the most concentrated levels of deprivation (Northern Ireland Assembly 9). According to the West Belfast Task Force, West Belfast was home to almost forty percent of all conflict-related deaths within the city (White and Simpson 16). In addition,

The West Belfast and Greater Shankill areas have experienced proportionately more deaths, injuries, bereavement and trauma than any other communities in Northern Ireland. They suffer proportionately more unemployment and ill health than most other areas in Northern Ireland (White and Simpson 31).

Despite the marginalization and violence experienced by the people of the West Belfast—or, perhaps more appropriately, because of the shared experience of neglect and discrimination under British and unionist rule—a number of grassroots initiatives were created to fill the needs of the local community (“West Belfast” 2). This community, home to the headquarters of Community Restorative Justice Ireland, will serve as a backdrop for this thesis.

Socioeconomic disadvantage in West Belfast

Statistical overview of deprivation

According to the West Belfast Economic Forum, a ward-based statistical study by the Noble Review of Measures of Deprivation (commissioned by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency published in June 2001 and 2005) shows West Belfast as the most socio-economically deprived area in the entire north of Ireland (see Appendix B):

Wards in West Belfast come out worst in terms of the health status of their populations, followed by deprivation with regard to income, child poverty, social environment, employment, education and housing. In other words, while the Noble measures suggest that West Belfast is in general now relatively well-

housed, those who live in the area are in bad health, survive on very low incomes, put up with a degrading social environment, have poor access to employment and experience huge inequalities in terms of educational attainment. The multi-deprivation measure shows almost two-thirds of wards in West Belfast are among the top ten percent most deprived in the North as a whole (qtd. in Hamilton and Fisher 85).

The following data on the categories of population, employment, education and housing provide a broad overview of deprivation in West Belfast.

The constituency of West Belfast is home to approximately 90,000 people, a population that comprises about one quarter of the total population of the entire city of Belfast, and about five percent of the total population in the north of Ireland. It is estimated that twenty-nine percent of the population is less than the age of 16, while thirteen percent are senior citizens, or “pensioners.” The majority of the citizens of West Belfast are Catholic. Appendix C shows the religious geography of the city of Belfast by electoral ward in 1991; note how West Belfast stands out from the rest of the city in terms of its Catholic population (Conflict Archive).

The employment statistics for the western part of the city reflect the degree to which this particular community has been alienated over the last several decades. When trying to make sense of the statistics, it is important to note that 55.8 percent of the working-age population in West Belfast is in a state of economic inactivity, defined as those taking care of families, the elderly or sick, in early retirement, or currently enrolled as students (Hamilton and Fisher 21). This leaves about 44.2 percent of West Belfast’s working-age population as economically active. Almost thirty-three percent of that economically active West Belfast population is unemployed, reports WBEF (“West Belfast Fact Sheet”). In some West Belfast wards only twenty-five percent of the working-age population is employed (“West Belfast Fact Sheet”). The highest level of unemployment in a West Belfast ward is fifty-one percent of those aged 16 and older (“West Belfast Fact Sheet”). According to WBEF, “the real rate of unemployment in West Belfast, counting all those who would genuinely take work if it were available for them, is likely to be over 25 percent, with an even higher rate for men” (Hamilton and Fisher 21).

There are a disproportionate number of unemployed persons dependent on state benefits in West Belfast, with all those in receipt of some form of benefit uptake totaling 34.4 percent of all claimants in the entire city of Belfast, as compared to 30.1 percent in North Belfast, 17.7 percent in South Belfast, and 17.5 percent in East Belfast. According to WBEF, the pattern of benefit dependency in West Belfast is intergenerational, and provides a snapshot of the social and economic infrastructure of the area. More recent efforts to improve and redefine social security legislation in the north of Ireland have not provided greater opportunities for those most in need, especially in areas like West Belfast:

The reality of benefit dependency in West Belfast is that it is inter-generational and shaped by social and economic disenfranchisement and institutionalized discrimination. Policy initiatives have largely failed in redressing the over-concentration of benefit claimants in West Belfast and equalizing the employment and life opportunities of those whose economic standing is determined by access to state benefit. For West Belfast claimants this is against a background in which (in relative terms) the income levels of the poorest 10 percent continue to decrease whilst the income of the richest 10 percent has dramatically increased, whilst patterns of employment and unemployment (evidenced in areas such as West Belfast) continue largely unabated (qtd. in Hamilton and Fisher 23-24).

Eilish Rooney's analysis for WBEF of the state of education in West Belfast provides a stark illustration of the manner in which social and economic inequality in this area of the city continues to perpetuate itself in the lives of area youth. The data, Rooney writes, tells "a story of a waste of the human potential for educational attainment in West Belfast...These 'snapshots' of education indicate that the future of education in West Belfast urgently requires attention if the cycles of underachievement are to be halted" (qtd. in Hamilton and Fisher 34). Compared to the three other parts of the city (North, South and East), West Belfast has the highest school dropout rate and the lowest number of students entering college/higher education. Twenty-five percent or more of students in thirteen of the seventeen electoral wards in the constituency have Free School Meal entitlements (qtd. in Hamilton and Fisher 54).

The housing situation in West Belfast is equally as stark; the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) considers this section of the city to be a blighted area, due to both the socioeconomic situation and the lack of available affordable housing (qtd. in

Hamilton and Fisher 54). In 2000, the NIHE reported approximately 2,000 people on the housing waiting list in West Belfast, with 587 reported homeless (qtd. in Hamilton and Fisher 54). The housing situation is further aggravated by private developers who purchase tracts of land, limiting the area available for development of social housing and leaving an overall shortage of usable land (qtd. in Hamilton and Fisher 59).

Skyrocketing land prices contribute to even greater problems in housing supply and demand in this sector of the city, and are exacerbated by conflicts in interface areas:

...confinement within areas perceived to be safe by the local population has further pushed housing and land prices upward. In this manner, the conflict has continued to have a detrimental effect on the availability of housing in West Belfast. Almost 300 families were ‘intimidated’ out of their houses in West Belfast in July and August 2000 alone. This produced an upsurge in demand for emergency social accommodation and stood against a backdrop where social housing stock was being off-loaded to the private sector. It inevitably pushed more families into the ‘homeless’ category (qtd. in Hamilton and Fisher 59).

In order to better comprehend the current socioeconomic context in which West Belfast is situated, it is necessary to place the community in the historico-political context of the last thirty-plus years of war. The following sections elaborate on the sources of the historical and enduring state of social and economic inequality and the current demographics of West Belfast as a post-conflict community as it emerges from decades of abuse and neglect at the hands of the state. This is also the context in which the nexus between policing, anti-social behavior and the rise of Community Restorative Justice can best be understood.

The birth of the six-county state and the politics of domination

Though the roots of the anti-colonial struggle in Ireland are, in historical terms, ancient, the origins of the more contemporary phase of the conflict (often referred to as “the Troubles”) can be traced more recently to the creation of the six-county state of Northern Ireland in 1921—a year before the Republic of Ireland achieved its independence from Britain—and the inherent polarization of the Catholic and Protestant communities, a by-product of the inception of that state (Ní Aoláin 18).

Harry Maguire, an IRA ex-prisoner and currently the lead training officer at Community Restorative Justice, recalled that period in Irish history. “That situation, the

birth of the state, wasn't done against a peaceful backdrop, and the forces of the state were very much to the fore of ensuring that the Catholics accepted the six county state," Maguire said. Perhaps more importantly, argues Maguire, those forces were dedicated to making sure that Catholics did not rebel against a partitioned Ireland. As a result, Catholics suffered severe discrimination at the hands of the state forces and were isolated from the unionist state and its institutions. "And at the very sharp end, it meant that Catholics were murdered on a very regular basis," Maguire continued. "And of course that kind of set the scene in terms of the state—how Catholics and nationalists and republicans viewed the state, the relationship with the state." The agents of the state and the criminal justice system, as a key pillar within any state or society, ensured that Catholics accepted the state, or at least knew their place in it, Maguire contends (Maguire, "An Introduction").

As outlined by scholar Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, at the time of partition, the Protestant majority in the north of Ireland—whose presence in Ireland was a consequence of seventeenth century British colonial settlements in Ulster—considered themselves politically and culturally British, while the Catholic minority regarded themselves as politically and culturally Irish. Northern Protestants were threatened by the newly independent Irish Catholic state to the south, and perceived the northern Catholic allegiance to their Irish political and cultural identity as a direct threat to the Protestant identity and hegemony in the six counties. Political identity evolved to be inextricably linked to religious affiliation in the North, and was eventually used to determine one's citizenship and loyalty to the newly created state (19).

According to Ní Aoláin, the founding of the state was characterized by insecurity on the part of the inbuilt Protestant majority, who feared the potential of being integrated into a united Ireland. She explains:

From the state's inception, the Protestant majority perceived its status to be threatened on two fronts: on the one hand, by the Catholic state on its doorstep, which had an explicit constitutional mandate to reunite the whole territory of the island; on the other, by an internal Catholic minority which did not identify with the ideology of the majority and was viewed by the state as politically subversive. The practical difficulty for the Protestant majority controlling power was that the internal minority was not small enough to be eliminated completely as a direct threat to the legitimacy of the state. Conversely, the minority, while initially

entirely reluctant to legitimize the state by participating in its creation, was thereafter politically and economically excluded from such partnership (20).

As a result of the perceived threat, the state established military and political mechanisms to protect itself from such a reality. These structures—especially the devolved government from Westminster—had a direct impact on the manner in which the conflict referred to as “the Troubles” would later unfold (Ní Aoláin 19). For instance, as political identities were so intimately linked with religious affiliation, so members of each community would cast votes along sectarian lines—thereby assuring that the government remained under Unionist control. In areas where Catholics were in the majority, electoral boundaries were shifted and property ownership qualifications were linked to voting rights in local elections (Ní Aoláin 20).

“Few states insisted on such ethnic exclusivity as Northern Ireland after 1922 and the deployment of such a comprehensive apparatus of repression and control of political, cultural and economic life was unique to any so-called democracy,” assert Graham Ellison and Jim Smyth in *The Crowned Harp: Policing Northern Ireland* (xvi). The comprehensive apparatus of repression manifested itself in a number of ways, as the protection of the state was of ultimate importance to the unionist regime. For example, police officers and other authorities were drawn almost exclusively from the unionist community; the establishment, administration and enforcement of laws were used unequivocally to carry out the political aims of the Protestant majority; and the advancement of state security was typically carried out through legislative procedures (Ní Aoláin 20-21). Sectarianism was in the best interests of the state, as it resulted in the incapacitation and division of the working class, explains Fionnbarra Ó Dochartaigh, “Such a device provided a smokescreen behind which their landed, industrial and speculative elites could keep a firm grip on the purse-strings, while the masses remained otherwise distracted and thus allowed themselves to be ‘kept in their place’” (1).

What most consider normal policing activities were in fact peripheral to the government’s central duty—controlling Catholic/nationalist dissent and protecting Unionist hegemony (Ellison and Smyth 36). The policing structures and the state-sponsored apparatus of repression were essential to the existence and survival of the Stormont government (Ellison and Smyth xv). Moving into the 1930s and beyond, the

Royal Ulster Constabulary would shift to more covert strategies of coercion and political control, relying on routine administrative functions and what was promoted as “community policing” to mask their true efforts toward political surveillance. Even the most ordinary, commonplace experience or routine stop could present the police with the occasion to collect political intelligence—even in times of relative stability and peace. RUC officers would stereotype the Catholics on their beat as ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ with good Catholics being those who supported the state and its agents, and bad Catholics as those who supported the IRA and the destruction of the state. As Ellison and Smyth note,

...the Northern Ireland state existed for over fifty years in a condition of imposed normality, where dense levels of policing and special security legislation became the norm. It was a state where the extraordinary became the ordinary and where the minority was held responsible for its own exclusion. What passed for normality during the early years of the existence of the Stormont state was attained through the unremitting suppression of all political dissent, whether constitutional or otherwise, and, after the state had consolidated its position, through less overt means (40-42).

Though the next few decades would pass with what would seem to be a period of relative stability, if there were periods of what seemed like peace in the north, “it was the peace of the graveyard, where expressions of minority culture and identity were seen as a threat and ruthlessly suppressed” (Ellison and Smyth 42). Any idealized portrait of life in Northern Ireland as a stable, normal society before the most recent manifestation of the anti-colonial conflict is false, and serves only to decontextualize the conflict and the aggressive nature of the policing force in the north of Ireland (Ellison and Smyth 41).

Civil rights and the struggle for democracy in the north of Ireland

The period of relative stability would last until the 1960s, when the Catholic minority organized themselves around a civil rights agenda aimed at ending discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and the inclusion of the minority community into the political and legal realm of the northern state (Ní Aoláin 22). “So there was then an uneasy peace, with trouble sort of flaring up every decade from the 20s right up until 1969,” continues Maguire. The 1960s was characterized by struggles for civil rights the world over—revolutionary struggles, contends Maguire, were breaking out and being successful in Cuba, in South America—and they were all organized around the struggle

for economic, cultural and identity rights. The dispossessed in Ireland looked to the Civil Rights Movement in the US, and to leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. for inspiration in their own struggle for civil rights in their small part of the world (Maguire, “An Introduction”). Fionnbarra Ó Dochartaigh, Derry activist and co-founder of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, recalls the prevailing mindset of the time:

We compared ourselves to the poor blacks of the US ghettos and those suffering under the cruel system of apartheid in racist South Africa. Indeed we viewed ourselves as Ulster’s white Negroes—a repressed and forgotten dispossessed tribe captured within a bigoted partitionist statelet that no Irish elector had cast a vote to create (14).

The 1960s were, of course, a very liberating time for many people around the world, recalled Maguire, and though Northern Ireland at the time was considered to be a democratic state, Catholics did not have equity within the voting structures, and were discriminated against on employment and housing fronts—to name just a few (Maguire, “An Introduction”). For example, gerrymandering was frequently used to maintain Protestant/Unionist majorities in areas where such re-districting would result in the consolidation of their power (“Northern Ireland” 14). The policy of “one man, one vote” did not exist in local elections—one need be a homeowner or the wife of a homeowner in order to vote. The Campaign for Social Justice in Northern Ireland estimated that this policy disenfranchised about a quarter of a million people within a total northern population of less than one million. Protestant families were favored on housing waiting lists, while Catholics often had to wait for twelve years or more for their housing allocation; the denial of property meant the denial of voting rights and was orchestrated by the Unionist majority councils (“Northern Ireland” 14).

The civil rights movement in the north of Ireland evoked a similar response from the state as did the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Explains Maguire, “When people ask for change or demand change, it is very often the case that that demand is met with violence from the state—very much like when people like Martin Luther King, Jr. went onto the streets. In a peaceful way to demand equality, they were met with force. And of course you say, who were the people using the force? And just as in the States it was the local police, the same took place in the north—where people

who were protesting in a peaceful way were literally beaten off the streets in a very brutal manner” (Maguire, “An Introduction”).

Although the civil rights activists in the north were simply trying to secure equal treatment under the law for the Catholic minority community, they were perceived as an attempt to challenge the legitimacy of the unionist state. As far as Stormont was concerned, the “peaceful” protestors marching in the streets were just another front for the Irish Republican Army. Government responses to the protests included making them illegal, quashing the protests with direct force, and turning a blind eye to violence on the part of loyalists fighting against the peaceful protestors (Ní Aoláin 23). The intransigence of the unionist government had disastrous results, and their strategy toward the civil rights movement would prove to be a prelude to three decades of war.

The government was prepared to protect itself by any means necessary, and so employed the state security forces—specifically the RUC and the B Specials—to form a violent, aggressive and uncompromising military response to the activists’ organization in the streets (Ní Aoláin 23). Ní Aoláin describes the impact of such tactics:

For the minority community this response could not be distinguished from the sectarian violence being directed at it from entrenched loyalists. Continuous rioting and an explosion of sectarian violence throughout the summer of 1969 left the RUC demoralized, unable to contain the spiraling sectarian strife and ultimately led to a decision by the British government to send in the British army to restore calm (23).

The reaction of the unionist establishment and the deployment of British troops on the streets of the north set the scene for a war situation.

What did this mean in terms of safety and security for the people of majority Catholic, nationalist communities like West Belfast? Harry Maguire explains that on a policing front, from 1969 until 1976, “there was no attempt at policing, there was no police presence in communities like this, in working class nationalist republican areas. The police were completely withdrawn, and the British army then preformed its military role. And policing then tended to slip of the agenda” (Maguire, “An Introduction”).

Two distinct phases of the conflict would follow militarization (1969-74): normalization or “Ulsterization” (1975-80), and the alliance of active counter-insurgency and extraordinary law (1981-94) (Ní Aoláin 57). The main objective of the second phase,

normalization, was to de-politicize the context of the war in an attempt to remove any sense of political legitimacy from those who opposed the state; this was done in part by the removal of special category status from political prisoners (Ní Aoláin 45). The third phase would see the security forces performing a military role, a large increase in the use of informers, and the use of the court system to deal with “terrorist” violence. As long as the court continued to function in a seemingly “normal” way, Ní Aoláin explains, the state would appear as though the situation was being handled appropriately, giving credence to the idea that the war was in fact an internal matter and not a low-intensity conflict (46). In the end, three thousand seven hundred and twenty-five people would be killed as a result of the conflict (McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney, Thornton and McVea 1552).

Meanwhile, as the state and the security forces changed their tactics, communities like West Belfast were forced to develop their own systems of policing and community safety. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Welcome to West Belfast

“West Belfast is known throughout the world as a hotbed of political invention and a platform for social progress,” declares Fáilte Feirste Thiar, a grassroots community organization dedicated to promoting tourism in West Belfast (“About”). Irish for “Welcome to West Belfast,” Fáilte Feirste Thiar, like Community Restorative Justice, was created about 10 years ago following the paramilitary ceasefires by an assortment of political leaders and community activists. This collection of citizens saw the potential economic renewal opportunities in the growth of the tourism industry and wanted to make sure local tourism benefited local people and remained under community control. “The legacy of the recent conflict,” proclaims their website, “is a confident community that attracts interest from actors, writers, politicians and an ever-increasing number of tourists from every continent” (“About”).

The legacy of the conflict in West Belfast has indeed created a confident and vibrant community sector—despite, or perhaps as a direct result of the dereliction of the state. The West Belfast Economic Forum reports that, even after experiencing generations of discrimination and marginalization and a disproportionate amount of

militarization compared to other areas of the north, the residents of West Belfast, seemingly paradoxically, have responded with resilience, dignity and creativity—and continue to draw from their traditions of self-reliance and community activism to create the building blocks of social and economic regeneration (“Introduction”). In fact, studies conducted in the north of Ireland have shown that communities with the highest incidences of crime and socio-economic deprivation also have the highest levels of citizen participation in civic, church, and other local grassroots activities (qtd. in McEvoy and Mika 549). The dynamic nature of the West Belfast community is a case in point, as the lack of integral social services and government support necessitated citizen engagement in order to fill in the gaps. The lack of responsive, accountable governmental power structures and the realities of a war situation on the ground in the north of Ireland “led to all kinds of innovative and unusual relationships and interactions and gave a considerably enhanced role to the voluntary and community sector” (qtd. in McEvoy and Mika 551).

While the strength of the community and the energy and enthusiasm of its citizens may have prevented West Belfast from imploding over the years, however—and in spite of recent historic progress in power-sharing in the north—West Belfast remains firmly entrenched at the top of almost every index of deprivation (Hamilton and Fisher 8). According to Callie Persic, the Neighborhood Renewal coordinator for the West Belfast Partnership Board, the most urgent impediment to social equity in West Belfast is the sheer amount of true deprivation experienced by local residents, in the form of exclusion, poor education, bad health, and anti-social behavior. Her day-to-day work shows that the more things have changed regarding social inequality in West Belfast, the more they have stayed the same: “A little bit of my fear when I’m out working in communities is that the areas that I’m working in...” Persic comments, “That if I look 20 or 30 years ago at towns in the Robson Index [of social deprivation], the poorest areas then are the poorest areas now” (Persic).

Why is it that, notwithstanding all of the progress of the peace process and the exaltations of economic prosperity that come along with it, the pockets of deprivation in certain neighborhoods and geographical sections of the city that existed twenty or thirty years ago still exist today? Sinn Féin Director of European Affairs and former city

councilor for North Belfast Eoin Ó Broin attributes it partly to the fact that the historic social and economic problems experienced in those communities have been compounded with each decade and each generation. “They create a kind of downward spiral of social, economic and community disintegration,” Ó Broin says. “So that means that those types of communities need additional resources—their social, their political, their economic resources—they need to come from within the community sector, from within the statutory sector at the local government level and from central government” (Ó Broin).

Unfortunately, it would appear that those necessary additional resources are not being allocated to the communities that are most in need. The strategies for tackling these seemingly immense problems do not need to be invented, argues Ó Broin—merely developed and implemented with the support of the government and private sector. “It’s about developing strategies to lift those communities through a process of community-based empowerment out of poverty and into some form of economic regeneration,” Ó Broin says (Ó Broin).

Many of the measures necessary to lift communities out of deprivation were actually incorporated into the Good Friday Agreement, yet according to veteran human rights campaigner Inez McCormack, there seems to be a systemic inability of those in power to take the responsibility for the implementation of those measures. Though the last ten years have been characterized by increased economic investment, the government’s own statistics continue to display a growing gap between the rich and the poor in both Catholic and Protestant communities. In a recent article for the *Irish Echo*, McCormack writes:

This growing inequality is a direct consequence of deliberately ignoring the commitments in law and policy on fairness and opportunity. Instead of the last decade being used to integrate economic and social development and using these tools of change agreed by the mandate of the people to lay solid foundations to underpin an inclusive peace and a stable economic base, the patterns of past investment and resource allocation are virtually undisturbed (McCormack).

Any actions taken to alleviate disadvantage in particular communities, argues McCormack, have not been measured against impacts, leaving the most disadvantaged sectors of the community as spectators to—rather than participators in—the burgeoning peace process (McCormack).

How does West Belfast find itself in the situation it is in today, a pocket of deprivation, a community that shoulders a disproportionate share of the burden of socioeconomic inequality and marginalization compared to other locales in the north of Ireland? The Belfast-based human rights group Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) commissioned a study on equality and discrimination in Northern Ireland that found the government guilty of turning a blind eye to initiatives with proven effectiveness in tackling community divisions. In fact, the report, entitled “Equality in Northern Ireland: the Rhetoric and the Reality,” and published in September 2006, came to the conclusion that the government, “is in fact introducing measures which, instead of reducing community divisions can only exacerbate them, and marginalize further the most disenfranchised in our society, both Catholic and Protestant” (100).

The CAJ report reflected the observations of community worker Callie Persic—the pockets of deprivation that exist today are indeed the same geographical areas that were the most marginalized thirty years ago and in most cases are the same neighborhoods that experienced the most violence during the conflict (55). The empirical evidence gathered by CAJ indicates that community divisions and sectarian discrimination continue to exist and are not a thing of the past, as many politicians would like the public to believe. For example, Catholics continue to have lower levels of economic activity and employment, and have a greater likelihood of living in workless households, as compared to their Protestant neighbors (65). A Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) report cited by CAJ concluded that there is a direct relationship between the proportion of Catholics in an area and the level of deprivation in that area. According to the report, “Catholics make up only 19.5 percent of the population in the 500 most affluent census output areas and 72 percent of inhabitants in the 500 most deprived areas” (116).

The updated 2005 Noble Measures of Deprivation also indicate that resources are not being allocated fairly, notes CAJ. The Noble index measures areas in Northern Ireland according to electoral ward as well as breaking up those wards into smaller areas called “Super Output Areas” with populations of about 1900 people. According to the 2005 study, North and West Belfast top the deprivation charts; just seven out of the fifty

most marginalized super output areas in Northern Ireland are located outside of North and West Belfast and Derry (qtd. in “Northern Ireland: the Rhetoric” 105-6).

The economic progress in the north has tended to benefit the middle classes, and the available evidence shows that significant numbers of both the Protestant and Catholic communities are not just being left behind, they are actually relatively more disadvantaged despite any recent prosperity in the North (“Northern Ireland: the Rhetoric” 138). Politicians pay lip service to these issues at best, states CAJ, but government policy does not consider resource allocation to those most in need to be a priority (139). The gap between the haves and the have-nots grows wider, while the most disadvantaged do not benefit from job creation and the poorest parts of Belfast continue to get passed over by inward investment and assistance (“Northern Ireland: the Rhetoric” 148).

CAJ lays the blame at the foot of the current government. Though the framework agreed upon in the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in 1998 contains the necessary equality provisions to achieve socio-economic progress and real, inclusive change, the lack of engagement on the part of government has meant that the problems facing the most marginalized communities are being exacerbated. Though the equality provisions carry the force of law, the CAJ report cites various instances where policies are adopted but not implemented, new policies are developed that undermine existing, successful measures, and local, cross-community initiatives are ignored (157). The current administration is abdicating its responsibility to the Northern Ireland community, charges CAJ, and furthermore, has tended to lay the blame on the communities themselves for their own disadvantage (167). To conclude their report, CAJ made a series of recommendations on how the government might promote the equality agenda, ranging from the provision of guidance on Equality Impact Assessments, increased monitoring of government policies with regard to equality and discrimination, setting new targets for neighborhood renewal, and that independent research be carried out into a variety of socio-economic issues.

Their conclusions also stressed the integral nature of local, grassroots efforts to develop frameworks for community transformation and revitalization (“Northern Ireland: the Rhetoric” 166). As mentioned previously, West Belfast boasts a thriving community

sector, that despite record levels of poverty and deprivation, continues to meet neglect with innovation, need with citizen participation. In the next chapter, I discuss how one such local initiative, Community Restorative Justice, was formed to repair and rebuild relationships, fill the policing gap, and build a solid foundation amongst neighbors for a safe and healthy environment in West Belfast.

ⁱ (Ní Aoláin 93).

Chapter Two: The Environment on Our Doorsteps: Justice, Sustainability, and the “Green” Issues

Introduction

“From my perspective, too many people look at the environment as that mountain [referring to West Belfast’s Black Mountain]—the ‘green’ issues,” says Liam Stone, a community activist who works in the Neighborhood Renewal Program at the Upper Springfield Development Trust in West Belfast. “To me,” Stone continues, “the environment is where we live. Where we socialize. It’s the environment on our doorstep. And I’m sure there’s reasons for it, but local peoples’ attitudes toward the environment, in terms of the dumping of rubbish and things like that there—I think that needs to be challenged and changed, you know? We need to make more and more people accept this: the environment on our doorsteps. The environment is where we live; it’s the quality of the house we have, it’s the condition of the estate that we live in, it’s about the access to good employment...crime, community safety issues...That to me is what the environment is about, as well as the green issues” (Liam Stone).

Liam Stone’s perspective on the West Belfast environment described here underscores the central importance of local community experiences, perspectives and priorities in providing the context for a vision of sustainable community development that is representative of a community’s real needs. Stone’s view posits an interdisciplinary interpretation of environmental problem solving—one that emphasizes a holistic approach and incorporates social and economic justice as environmental issues—rather than adopting a fragmented conceptualization of the world around him. As I will discuss in this chapter, conventional discourse on the environment and sustainability view these concepts as separate from social and economic issues, which is problematic as these issues are critically interconnected.

Any meaningful discussion of sustainability must begin with two primary questions: what exactly are we trying to sustain, and when we argue for sustainability—sustainable for whom? Author Thomas Prugh, along with ecological economists Herman Daly and Robert Costanza, put forth a

conceptualization of sustainability that allows for differences in vision from one community to the next, but emphasizes the integral role that citizen participation plays in democratic decision-making and community building. Politics—especially at the local level—is key. They argue that only through fundamental changes in social, political and economic institutions will we truly begin to proceed toward our goal of sustainability. They write:

Because the conflict is about values, sustainability must be socially and politically defined. Sustainability is provisional; it is subject to multiple conceptions and continuous revision, the very stuff of politics (7).

Local communities and local activists must form the foundation upon which responsive political systems are built, write the scholars—this will allow for citizens to be directly involved in determining what their community will and should look like (Prugh, Costanza and Daly 162).

For Stone, a sustainable West Belfast is more than just a neighborhood with less garbage on the streets, more parks, trees or less pollution—or even one where most residents are more aware of the green issues. Rather, Stone’s vision for West Belfast reflects the real needs of the area—social, economic, and political—and provides an excellent starting point for a discussion of the role that peace, justice and citizen participation can and should play in the development of sustainable communities.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the limitations of popular/mainstream environmental, environmental justice and sustainability discourses, and focuses on how they decontextualize key issues and analyze them in a fragmented way to promote a specific agenda. Central to this discussion will be the importance of perspective and framing: how people view their own environment and the world around them, how essential they are to producing meaningful change, and how this contrasts with mainstream approaches to environmental sustainability and the “green” issues. Using the work of Community Restorative Justice and the community of West Belfast as a guide, and drawing from the theory of Just Sustainability (a framework that merges the concept of environmental justice with sustainable development) I will present a

case for an integrated, holistic approach to social, economic, and environmental concerns. The tremendous amount of social capital and participation at the community level in West Belfast, combined with the current momentum of change throughout the north of Ireland, make this locale an illustrative model on which to build a comprehensive plan for ground-breaking change. I will also highlight the role that the incorporation of peace and justice with an emphasis on citizen participation can play in the future development of these discourses—particularly at a local, grassroots level.

Visions of sustainability, and those visions—like Stone’s—that are inclusive and rooted in community experience, serve to provide a context for and catalyze a process of creating change from the ground up. This chapter will focus on how the roots of deprivation, alienation, disadvantage, and marginalization must serve as a starting point for any movement for socioeconomic and environmental equity.

Environmental justice: a holistic approach to the “environment”

The question ‘what are we trying to sustain’ gives rise to the notion of how one defines one’s environment—a hotly contested issue in both academic and activist circles. Depending upon one’s perspective, what constitutes the environment can mean issues related to the conservation and preservation of our natural world, or be more broadly defined as the world around us—with humanity as an active participant in the intricate web of interconnected relationships that define life on this planet. The role that people play in one’s concept of the environment is a useful and informative way to understand how one will define environmentalism and sustainability. This paper will use the definition of environment as outlined by the environmental justice movement (EJM).

The EJM has spent the past thirty years defining its approach, and working to promote a worldview that goes beyond the green issues to an equality-based, inclusive and just conception of what constitutes “the environment” and “environmentalism.” The EJM was born out of the Civil Rights movement as an attempt to refocus the environmental agenda to include issues of race, class and

justice. Central to the teachings of environmental justice is the fact that the natural world is but one environment in which people live. “It basically says that the environment is everything: where we live, work, play, go to school, as well as the physical and natural world. And so we can't separate the physical environment from the cultural environment,” says Robert Bullard, Director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University and one of the founders of the environmental justice movement in the United States. What the environmental justice movement aims to do, explains Bullard, is to “educate and assist groups in organizing and mobilizing, empowering themselves to take charge of their lives, their community and their surroundings. It's more of a concept of trying to address power imbalances, lack of political enfranchisement, and to redirect resources so that we can create some healthy, livable and sustainable types of models” (Schweizer).

Environmental justice itself is also challenging to define. Agyeman and Evans (2004) suggest that this is due in part to the fact that the concept is both a way to describe a grassroots effort to organize and mobilize communities as well as an actual set of principles used to steer policy decisions (160). For the purposes of this paper, I will use the definition of environmental justice from the University of Michigan’s School of Natural Resources and Environment:

Environmental Justice is the right to a safe, healthy, productive, and sustainable environment for all, where "environment" is considered in its totality to include the ecological (biological), physical (natural and built), social, political, aesthetic, and economic environments. Environmental justice refers to the conditions in which such a right can be freely exercised, whereby individual and group identities, needs, and dignities are preserved, fulfilled, and respected in a way that provides for self-actualization and personal and community empowerment. This term acknowledges environmental "injustice" as the past and present state of affairs and expresses the socio-political objectives needed to address them (qtd. in “Environmental Justice”).

This particular definition provides a strong basis for a conversation about what we mean by sustainable development and what a sustainable community should look like, while paying close attention to the two key questions mentioned earlier (i.e., what are we trying to sustain, and sustainable for whom?).

While Stone's vision of what constitutes the "environment" captures the essence of environmental justice, his perspective also incorporates a range of socio-economic issues—crime, safety, employment, housing—that are not only not considered green issues, but all too often exist only on the periphery of popular EJ discourse. Stone's view gives rise to a number of important questions that need to be answered should we wish to gain any ground on the road to the development of truly sustainable communities. What exactly is a "green" issue, and who decides which issues are considered as such and which are not? Why are issues of access to adequate schooling and employment—along with proximity to environmental hazards—considered EJ issues, when drugs, police brutality and violence in the community are not? Those issues considered environmental in Stone's definition, and those generally not considered "green" simply do not fit into popular conceptions of sustainability—and this is a central limiting factor to the achievement of a truly sustainable community. The line drawn between those issues considered environmental in EJ's expansive sense, and other socio-economic issues that confront low-income communities and communities of color on a daily basis is arbitrary at best. What can a more holistic approach to the environment, socio-economic justice, and sustainability, as reflected in Liam Stone's vision, tell us about the most effective ways to create lasting changes in our communities? How do people fit into that holistic approach? These are questions that this thesis aims to answer.

Framing the debate: mainstream environmentalism and sustainability

The 2004 essay "The Death of Environmentalism" by strategists Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus and the controversy in environmental circles that met its publication provide a tremendous amount of insight into mainstream debates about notions of environmentalism and sustainability. Grassroots activists and academics alike immediately criticized the authors for completely overlooking the existence of the EJ movement and its contributions to the core issues the essay confronts; however, it is still a powerful tool to illuminate the shortcomings of the mainstream environmental movement and the manner in

which it determines priorities and sets its agenda. In addition to their critique, Shellenberger and Nordhaus also provide sound arguments for an inclusive, holistic vision for change that emphasizes coalition building and reflects a community's real needs.

The authors begin by asking why we have so little to show for all of the hard work since the founding of the environmental movement. The essay's main premise is that environmental leaders are convinced that their problems with not making progress (in terms of achieving major conservation goals, such as curbing carbon emissions or limiting deforestation in the Amazon) are tactical and focus on technical fixes or policy approaches to problems that are in essence political in nature (Shellenberger and Nordhaus 1-37). In other words, the entire approach to the environment and politics—or the framing of the debate—on behalf of the mainstream environmental movement is erroneous, outdated, and actively serves as an obstacle to meaningful change.

Alongside the emphasis on tactical solutions, the limited way in which the term “environmental” is defined is problematic; the authors argue that the basis for what is included as environmental and what is not is entirely arbitrary. For some, the idea that the environment is an entity that needs to be protected (by its defenders—environmentalists) provides support for the idea that the environment is a separate “thing” that humans are detached from and superior to. “Nature” and “environment” have been subverted to the point where they have little to no meaning, yet according to Shellenberger and Nordhaus, continue to have a “debilitating” power over the public. The arbitrary and subjective designation of environmental problems by the mainstream environmental community quickly becomes apparent to those who include humans within their concept of the “environment.” The authors point out the capricious nature of such arbitrary distinctions:

Why, for instance, is a *human-made* phenomenon like global warming — which may kill hundreds of millions of *human beings* over the next century — considered “environmental”? Why are poverty and war not considered environmental problems while global warming is? What are the implications of framing global warming as an *environmental* problem – and handing off the responsibility for dealing with it to “environmentalists” (12)?

The limited framing also thwarts attempts to organize collective action towards problem-solving (such as around global warming), as potential allies are viewed as opportunities to get a new constituency on board—rather than to cross-pollinate ideas and build solidarity on issues of mutual interest. The result? The narrower a problem is defined, the narrower the solution.

The key, then, is to expand the way we look at the larger issues and the way they interconnect—in the words of Shellenberger and Nordhaus, “the solutions we dream up depend on how we structure the problem” (14). A conceptualization of environmental issues that will allow for substantive, transformative change is one that will provide the space necessary to debate and challenge the long-accepted and unquestioned premises of mainstream environmentalism. Formulating new visualizations of the environment and our role within it is necessary to identify the roots of our common socio-economic and environmental problems and to capitalize on building strategic alliances to successfully confront those problems in a proactive way.

As mentioned previously, this essay was met with criticism from those within the EJ movement who have long since been organizing across issues and building coalitions to work on common goals. Activist and writer Adrienne Marie Brown was one notable critic of the manner in which Shellenberger and Nordhaus dramatized the “death” of environmentalism. She argued that for urban people of color in particular, the mainstream environmental movement simply does not address issues that are relevant to people’s everyday lives. In effect, environmentalism has become an issue for “the privileged or the issueless.” Brown describes the crux of the problem like this:

Overall, too many young people see the struggles of humans as separate from the struggles for a healthy environment. It isn't because we have bad intentions—it's because a generation that does not care about the impact of its lifestyle on the environment can be easily manipulated for corporate greed. We are getting played out. And unfortunately, the environmental movement has actually helped enforce that disconnect by seeming to draw divisions between the natural world and its human inhabitants—and by seeming to worry more about the former than the latter (Brown).

Brown's words reflect the disillusionment with the mainstream environmental frame from the perspective of a young person of color. In making her recommendations for transition for environmental leaders, Brown evokes the central tenants of the EJ movement [see the Principles of Environmental Justice, Appendix D]. To appeal to people, to get them to be concerned about environmental issues, you have to meet them where they are at—to talk to them about things they will find meaningful, to explain how the important work of environmentalism overlaps with other issues that matter to them (Brown). If “environment” includes people and is defined as the place where we live, work and play—then it becomes that much easier to understand how housing conditions, community safety, access to employment and other quality of life concerns are in fact environmental issues. Though Shellenberger and Nordhaus make a huge oversight in failing to incorporate the EJ struggle into their thesis, both theses stress the importance of an inclusive vision as the path toward a viable, sustainable solution. “The loss of your borders,” says Brown to environmentalists, “won't mean a dilution of your vision, it will simply mean a larger, greater, more inclusive vision” (Brown). In other words: *the solutions we dream up depend on how we structure the problem.*

The separation of social justice issues from environmental concerns is a traditional view of the mainstream environmental movement, explains Taylor (2000), extending back prior to the 1960s when environmental issues were framed to attract middle-class whites and elites (556), and is markedly different from people of color perspectives on environmental issues. Because low-income and communities of color have different environmental experiences, it makes sense that they would relate to the environment in a different way; many people of color, for example, live, work and recreate in the same areas—therefore they would be less inclined to separate environmental issues from occupational ones (Taylor 558). The experience of people of color with regard to environmental activism, therefore, has been one of redefining the boundaries of the mainstream discourse, and according to Taylor, focuses on three areas: autonomy/self-determination, land rights, and civil/human rights (533). Taylor's own research

has shown that people of color environmental groups focus on a broader range of issues (537), and her breakdown of the concepts outlined in the Principles of Environmental Justice (see Appendix D) allows for people to make the meaningful connections between the environment and lived experience that Brown so passionately calls for above (537-9).

The limited framing we see in mainstream environmentalism is also reflected in traditional approaches to the concept of sustainability. The most widely cited definition of sustainable development comes from the 1987 Bruntland Report, *Our Common Future*, a publication of the World Commission on Environment and Development: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (“Our Common Future”). This definition has remained largely unquestioned by mainstream environmental groups since the report’s publication, but has been harshly criticized in wider academic and activist circles. According to Bill Willers, professor at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, “Sustainable development is one of the most insidious and manipulable ideas to appear in decades, and because the multifaceted, global offensive to sell it is essentially unopposed, it is perceived as something of an axiom by the public” (Willers 1148).

Willers argues that the term “sustainable development” is but a code word for perpetual growth, and cites many passages from the Bruntland Report that back up his thesis—perhaps the most revealing of which is a line from the chapter entitled *The Growth Imperative and Sustainable Development*: “The maxim of sustainable development is not ‘limits to growth;’ it is ‘the growth of limits’” (qtd. in Willers 1146). The ability of those in power to use the term to satisfy their own ends makes the notion of sustainability something of a chameleon, Willers contends. Couched in the rhetoric of respecting environmental constraints, corporate and political entities are able to package continued growth and development as something that is in harmony with the natural world. That such a perspective is enshrined in the same literature that gave mainstream environmentalism its popular definition of sustainability—yet does not address

the patterns of overconsumption of the Global North at the expense of the Global South—speaks volumes, Willers notes (1147). Absent from the prevailing discourse is any attention to the human condition; to addressing power imbalances or access to political or economic resources, the likes of which are integral to achieving a sustainable reality.

In addition, current sustainability paradigms do not provide a template or roadmap for how sustainability might be achieved. Instead, argues Ken Conca, Associate Professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, enviro-sustainability activists preach restraint (i.e., incorporating limits) and optimization (the promotion of micro-managed resource use and allocation) as key strategies. By framing the debate in political-institutional terms, such an agenda ignores the scale and reality of the problem we face. How are we moving closer to our goal when the very institutions tasked with overseeing the solutions are unreformed and often largely responsible for the causes of unsustainability in the first place? Sustainability, asserts Conca, presupposes a kind of political transformation that is nearly unprecedented in modern timesⁱ—a reality that is not incorporated into mainstream discussions of what sustainability looks like or how we might achieve it and all but absent from the environmental literature on the subject. “It may be more effective,” Conca opines, “to pursue the creation of more peaceful, just international institutions as a foundation for the very difficult social changes that global sustainability will ultimately require” (Conca, “Peace, Justice” 26).

The leading paradigms paint sustainability as a technical problem that can be fixed with a technical solution, thereby driving a wedge between social and ecological approaches to problem-solving, rather than promoting both as intimately connected—that a shared understanding of the two is necessary to achieve tangible results. Viederman (1996) argues that sustainability should rather be understood as a social construct, or “a vision of the future”—with an emphasis on an envisioning process that is ongoing, transformative and open to change and has the power to achieve new possibilities. Such an envisioning process must necessarily be holistic, participatory, and approach issues

proactively—with a mind towards producing meaningful change rather than managing circumstances (46).

Environmentalism in its popular manifestation has proven itself to be a concern for the privileged—for those who can choose which movements or areas to be active in—and for too long environmental activists and community organizers have been moving in “parallel lines that never converge”; it is imperative that we recognize and build on our commonalities if we are to create workable alternatives for the future (Warburton 11). It is time, then, to critique, refine and add substance to popular conceptualizations of sustainable development.

Reconceptualizing: Towards a New Frame

Fortunately, valuable lessons can be learned from other grassroots efforts to build solidarity within and amongst movements to re-frame issues in a more empowering and constructive way. How might we learn from other movements using “joined-up thinking” or holistic approaches to combating problems at their source? The radical women of color collective Incite! Women of Color Against Violence demonstrates the integral role that visioning and reconceptualization can play in movement formation and strategic planning. Incite! is a “national activist organization of radical feminists of color advancing a movement to end violence against women of color and their communities through direct action, critical dialogue and grassroots organizing” (“About Incite”). Incite! challenges popular approaches to ending violence by expanding the discourse to address violence against women of color in all of its forms. Central to the vision of Incite! is the development of analyses and strategies to achieve their mission by placing women of color at the center of all organizing efforts (“About Incite”).

Environmentalists would gain from a similar approach, by placing humans and human rights at the center of their organizing efforts—as well as by considering where their goals overlap with those of other movements.

Rather than conform to the politics of inclusion—where women of color and/or multicultural issues are folded into existing frameworks, Incite! asks:

“What would it take to *end violence against women of color*? What would this movement look like? What if we do not presume that this movement would share any of the features we take for granted in the current domestic violence movement” (Smith, Richie, Sudbury and White 4)? Here, organizers acknowledge the limitations of the existing paradigm and turn it upside-down, understanding that simply identifying the causes of injustice will not bring justice. Only through thinking creatively and adopting new perspectives will society approach the creation of communities where violence is unthinkable. The editors of Color of Violence: the Incite! Anthology explain that an analysis that centers women of color will increase the amount of tools available to create those communities, to achieve their vision of an end to violence against women of color:

When we shift the center of analysis, there is no permanent center of organizing. Rather, by constantly shifting the center to communities that face intersecting forms of oppression, we gain a more comprehensive view of the strategies needed to end all forms of violence (4).

This perspective can be easily transferred to the necessary overhaul of mainstream environmental perspectives and the dominant sustainability paradigm. Why compartmentalize social and environmental justice issues when each affects our daily lives? What would it take to end patterns of overconsumption and the destruction of our natural world while improving the quality of life both North and South? What would an environmentalism that centers human rights look like? If we concentrate on the areas where social, economic and environmental issues intersect and use those areas as starting points to formulate new visions and strategies, we will in the process create new spaces in which substantive change can take place. At each step along the way, we must continuously shift our analysis so that human rights are at the center of all of our organizing efforts. No longer should humans and human rights be viewed as separate from or opposed to the natural world.

There are many existing frameworks that center human rights and represent new approaches to sustainable development that are challenging and dynamic that merit attention here. First, I will discuss the role that peace and

justice—as strategies rather than abstract values (Conca, “Peace, Justice” 26)—can play in the development of sustainable communities. Next, I will discuss the concept of “human security” as outlined by the United Nations Commission on Human Security, with an emphasis on how environmental justice and sustainable development can be understood within this context. Then I will examine “sustainable human development,” a theory which highlights the role that empowerment can play to alleviate poverty and create opportunities for future generations. The remainder of this section will serve as a foundation for a more in depth discussion of “just sustainability,” an approach created by Professor Julian Agyeman that deliberately confronts the dominant environmental and sustainability paradigms and uses the intersections of environmental justice and sustainability to create a vision that gives primacy to human rights, social justice, and truly sustainable change. The Just Sustainability Paradigm can be viewed as a new environmental discourse that incorporates all of these human rights-centered strategies.

Peace, justice and sustainability

What does a sustainable community look like, and how will society get there? Questions about exactly *how* sustainability can be achieved have never been at the heart of the sustainable development debate, Conca points out. He stresses the need to define new roles and rules and to redefine new ways of doing things in our existing institutions—an undertaking that is at best highly problematic. To do so would require a concentration of political power, the likes of which has been largely responsible for creating the types of problems (such as overwhelming poverty, global warming and so forth) that we are facing today (Conca, “Peace, Justice” 22-5). This idea recalls Shellenberger and Nordhaus’s position that many of our environmental problems are in fact political in nature, and therefore do not merit tactical or technological fixes.

As mentioned previously, Conca argues that popular conceptions of sustainability do not take into account the tremendous changes that need to be made to our political institutions in order to actually achieve anything resembling a sustainable community. Our political institutions are largely responsible for

shaping societal values and behavior, and for providing the incentives to motivate individual changes argues Conca—and it is this sort of power to influence substantive change that the sustainability agenda desperately needs. The leading sustainability paradigms fall short because they concern themselves with only one side of concentrating political power, and as a result, end up being inconsistent when it comes to the interconnected relationships between peace, justice and sustainability (Conca, “Peace, Justice” 23).

Each of the principal models of restraint and optimization are ambiguous and circumstantial when it comes to peace and justice. Conca writes:

Seen through the lens of either paradigm, the importance of peace and justice varies situationally: depending upon the circumstances, these values may appear as useful means to an end—sustainability—or as conflicting goals that undermine sustainability, or as worthy but lesser goals to be attained in some future world in which sustainability has already been guaranteed (“Peace, Justice” 23).

The restraint paradigm, which focuses on incorporating limits into the system so as to remain within the carrying capacity of the earth, puts the natural environment at the center of the analysis with regard to the sustainability debate—leaving justice as a goal deferred. In this case, equitable distribution and issues of poverty and human security are subordinate to the requirements of the planet. Though some versions of the restraint paradigm may argue that restraint in fact provides justice, this is usually for future generations, resulting in a conflict over claims for justice now or in the future, explains Conca. On the other hand, the optimization paradigm acknowledges that the lack of social justice serves as an obstacle to sustainability. Poverty is considered to be destructive to sustainable development, yet the optimization paradigm does not go far enough in confronting the roots of poverty or how poverty alleviation must play a lead role in any sustainable development strategy. This theory is imperfect, argues Conca, because it relies on unreformed institutions to carry out its goals—institutions which are far too often directly responsible for creating the conditions it wishes to improve. If states and markets are not instruments of justice, Conca reasons, then

distribution among states does not equal distribution within them (“Peace, Justice” 22).

Popular understandings of environmentalism must be challenged—far too much time has been wasted looking at problems in isolation. Conca believes that an interdisciplinary perspective would allow society to create the balance that is so essential to provide for human security and protect the natural world. We must pursue solutions that are political and community-wide, as opposed to individual and consumerist so that we may view advocacy, organizing, community initiatives, civic participation and voting as “environmental behavior,” stresses Conca (“Building Peace”).

Conca’s insight on the relationship between peace, justice and sustainability is particularly informative for understanding the contributions that Community Restorative Justice Ireland can make towards the way forward for a society in transition. He gives credence to the idea that violence and injustice expose the illegitimacy of authority, and views the debilitating effects of violence and injustice (on the part of states in particular) as one of the primary forces that undermine an area’s sense of community (Conca, “Peace, Justice” 27). Community Restorative Justice is the product of an active, concerned citizenry using “joined-up thinking” to counter the corrosive effects of violence in the community; to repair damaged relationships and nurture new ones; and to serve as a liaison between members of the community and the police force.

If, as Conca asserts, much of the solution lies in identifying and building on common ground—seeing the interconnections between struggles for human rights, environmental protection, and disarmament as a critical institutional innovation (“Peace, Justice” 28)—then Community Restorative Justice may play a crucial role in building a bridge between what takes place at the community level and the creation of more just, accountable and responsible institutions. To take this a step further in confronting the “environment as nature” perspective, Conca writes, “What is needed is a broadly shared understanding: violence against nature and violence against people are intimately linked, and institutions contributing to one problem cannot be the foundation for solving the other”

(“Peace, Justice” 29). The role that the work of Community Restorative Justice plays at the grassroots level through its mediation and problem solving and the resulting empowerment of participants is fundamental to creating the groundwork and sense of community necessary for truly sustainable community development.

Human security

The United Nations (UN) Commission on Human Security was established at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit to address the challenges presented by globalization, conflict, poverty, disease and human rights violations around the world, as well as to promote the shared goals of “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear” (United Nations iv). The work of the Commission is informed by two main themes—human insecurities that result from conflict and violence, and the relationship between human security and development. Both projects are enlightening in the context of West Belfast, as a marginalized and underdeveloped area still recovering from decades of violent conflict, and in the beginning stages of redevelopment and revitalization.

The concept of human security connects the human dimensions of security, rights, and development. Human security is a comprehensive and holistic approach to the world’s most pressing problems, as former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan points out:

Human security in its broadest sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment—these are the interrelated building blocks of human, and therefore national, security (United Nations 4).

Human security does not promote an agenda that serves a particular social or economic interest; rather, it blends existing paradigms while re-centering human rights. Indeed, as the authors of “Human Security Now” point out, “Rethinking security in ways that place people and their participation at the centre is an imperative for the 21st century” (United Nations 11). The Commission’s visualization also calls for the creation of space at the cultural, political, social and environmental levels that allow communities to live in dignity, with the opportunity and ability to use their own strengths to enhance their lives.

Though the UN defines human security as the protection of the “vital core of human lives,” the framers also acknowledge that each locality must define the components of human security according to their own needs, as different people will have different views of what is meaningful and essential (United Nations 11).

It is plain to see the way that the UN’s conceptualization of human security in many ways parallels the essence of environmental justice. As an integrated approach, it encompasses many of the core tenets of environmental justice—from empowerment and participation to access to opportunity and political power to the right of all to live in a healthy environment without all of the “-isms” (Bryant 4). For example, human security, as described by Frene Ginwala—can be seen much like the realization of an environmentally just community:

...individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety and participate fully in the process of governance. They enjoy the protection of fundamental rights, have access to resources and the basic necessities of life, including health and education, and inhabit an environment that is not injurious to their life and well-being (3).

Sustainable human development

John Joseph Puthenkalam knows of no period of time when society has not faced the seemingly insurmountable scourge of poverty—yet with each passing generation society comes no closer to confronting this serious and debilitating problem. In his critical study, Empowerment: Sustainable Human Development Strategy for Poverty Alleviation, Puthenkalam, a Jesuit priest and Professor of Global Environmental Studies at Sophia University (Japan), asserts that only through revolutionary change will society truly be able to confront and overcome the poverty that is the foundation for the lion’s share of the world’s social, economic, and environmental problems. Theoretical and practical models of sustainable development and poverty alleviation strategies must necessarily be redesigned—if we are to avoid continuing to hand off this problem to future generations (374). Puthenkalam writes:

...the core problem remains the same. It is not lack of research or understanding about the problem of poverty. What we lack at national as well as international level is a necessary political will. It is better to state in plain words on the foreheads of the poor that we are not interested in

solving this problem that keeps you poor because it is the status quo approach that keeps us rich and powerful (374-5).

Central to Puthenkalam's thesis is the idea that only when people are secure in their daily lives will the world be at peace. Though the author's ideas complement the UN Commission on Human Security's position, the relationship between human security and sustainable development is given much more prominence in his work. Puthenkalam writes, "It will not be possible for the community of nations to achieve any of its major goals—not peace, not environmental protection, not human rights or democratization, not fertility reduction, not social integration—except in the context of sustainable development that leads to human security" (49).

Puthenkalam likens the popular concept of sustainable development to "motherhood and apple pie." No one can argue that it is not a good thing, and it is not possible to be against development that meets current needs while providing for future generations, he argues. Unfortunately, the appealing nature of this development paradigm masks its operational difficulties—and most do not step forth to confront the unresolved issues that lie just beneath the surface. Who, for example, will address the vast inconsistencies between definitions of "need" that exist between the rich and the poor, asks Puthenkalam (66). Again, issues like empowerment, power imbalances, and access to political and economic resources must be central to any conversation about development.

According to Puthenkalam, the key to poverty alleviation will come through empowerment—a new way of seeing power that centers poor people; that transfers power from the rich or elite and puts it in the hands of the people at the grassroots. Yesterday's answers will not yield today's solutions, Puthenkalam asserts (echoing Shellenberger, Nordhaus and Conca), and transformative change requires courage and vision to confront systems of power that perpetuate poverty and oppression. If empowerment means the true sharing of power, then sustainable human development based on the idea of empowered communities is an appropriate vision of a new strategy to achieve poverty alleviation (Puthenkalam 1-3).

In building a case for his new vision, Puthenkalam discusses the changing face of human security in this era of globalization. Increasing socio-economic disparities and deprivation will lead to conflicts that are more often civil in nature than between and amongst nations, he writes. Though the conflict in the north of Ireland is colonial in nature, and does indeed have a civil dimension, it has at its roots inequality, marginalization and deprivation. Development that targets inequality and deprivation should be the focus of peace-building efforts there and around the world, as the search for security turns away from the use of arms and towards fair and just redevelopment, argues Puthenkalam (3).

“To address the growing challenge of human security, a new development paradigm is needed that puts people at the centre of development, regards economic growth as a means and not an end, protects the life opportunities of future generations as well as the present generation and respects the natural systems upon which all life depends,” contends Puthenkalam (54-5). Here, the thinking reflects the basic principles of environmental justice, while putting human rights at the center of the sustainability debate. The new development paradigm Puthenkalam envisions would allow people the agency and opportunity to maximize their potential, protects the necessary resource base, provides for the richness of nature, and fundamentally alters the world’s production and consumption patterns and income distribution (54-5).

Adrienne Marie Brown maintains that the environmental movement is a place for the privileged or the issueless, that “the natural world is becoming a place to visit or dream of, a privilege for those who can find work outside cities, or a trap for those in the migrant worker population who lack fair wages and work situations” (Brown). The EJ movement suggests the issue is not that low-income and communities of color do not care about the environment—all too often it is these communities who bear the brunt of environmental hazards caused by people in positions of power. Environmental issues are understood by these grassroots communities as quality of life issues, as access to jobs and education, and so on. Writes Puthenkalam:

The very poor, struggling for their very survival, often lack the resources to avoid degrading their environment. In poor societies, what is at risk is not the quality of life—but life itself. The poor are not preoccupied with the loud emergencies of global warming or the depletion of the ozone layer. They are preoccupied with the silent emergencies—polluted water or degraded land—that put their lives and livelihoods at risk. Unless the problems of poverty are addressed, environmental sustainability cannot be guaranteed (112).

To fully address the problems of poverty, society must address the root quality of life issues that prevent poor people from being able to exercise agency over their lives. Empowerment is the key to ending poverty, asserts Puthenkalam. Providing people with the capacity to make the important decisions that affect their lives while building a foundation for people at the grassroots to drive transformative change in their own communities creates the conditions necessary to reduce dependency, increase self-confidence and for neighborhoods to thrive. This view is confirmed by the Commission on Human Security, which insists that increasing the ability of people to act on their own behalf gives them the ability to demand respect, create new employment and other opportunities for themselves and their communities, and can and will address problems locally (United Nations 11). The story of Community Restorative Justice demonstrates the results and impact that such local empowerment can have on an individual level as well as on a marginalized community recovering from violent impact.

Just sustainability: bridging the gap

The Just Sustainability Paradigm (JSP) envelops all of the innovative theories discussed here and contextualizes the unmistakable link between environmental quality, poverty, social justice and people’s overall quality of life within the environmental justice and sustainable development discourses. “A truly sustainable society is one where wider questions of social needs and welfare, and economic opportunity, are integrally connected to environmental concerns,” argue academics Julian Agyeman, Robert Bullard, and Bob Evans in Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World (2). It stands to reason that

unjust societies cannot be environmentally or economically sustainable in the long run.

The JSP overlaps prevailing discourses with an overt emphasis on equity and quality of life concerns; inherent in the paradigm is the understanding that there are a variety of issues—beyond those typically considered green in the environmental realm—that are legitimate and must be recognized. Agyeman’s explanation of the JSP twists the popular definition of sustainable development to explicitly focus on justice: just sustainability is “the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems” (Agyeman 92).

Agyeman, Bullard and Evans cite three dimensions that underpin the necessity of the new paradigm: first, studies have shown that areas with more equal income distribution, civil liberties and higher literacy rates have higher environmental quality; second, low-income communities are disproportionately affected by and bear a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards (EJ); and third, that the concept of “sustainability” simply cannot be limited to mainstream environmental concerns (1-2). Though environmental sustainability is certainly of critical importance, changes in behavior are not enough—long-term sustainability will not be possible unless societies actively struggle for more social and economic opportunity (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2).

Though the Principles of Environmental Justice might state otherwise, Agyeman believes that the environmental justice movement has traditionally been reactive *in practice*. He explains that EJ is caught up in a pluralistic decision-making process, while sustainable development advocates are not, and are more often involved in communicating their ideas of what the future should look like, even if this vision is technological at heart. The solution, as Agyeman sees it, is to incorporate justice and equity into the heart of the environmental sustainability movement, thereby blending the best of both paradigms (Agyeman 106). “This,” Agyeman explains, “is the gauntlet that the environmental justice movement has thrown down to the development of sustainable communities” (Agyeman 6).

New, viable strategies will only result from “joined-up thinking,” an expression used to describe a perspective focused on interconnectivity. Proponents of just sustainability echo the call for new visions of what sustainability should look like and how it can be achieved. Change requires proactive, creative solutions that will necessarily come from community-based coalitions of citizens from different social and economic locations:

Sustainability is at its heart a political rather than a technical construct. It represents a *belief* in the need for societies to adopt more sustainable patterns of living, and it is both a focus for political mobilization by individuals and organized interests, and a policy goal for governments. As with other overarching societal values such as democracy and freedom, there are many interpretations of what sustainability might be and how societies might make progress towards it (qtd. in Agyeman 43).

What are the needs of the community and who defines them as such? This perspective gives rise to important questions that localities should consider when devising strategies for progress towards sustainability in their own neighborhoods. Individual grassroots initiatives, like Community Restorative Justice, can and should be vetted within this context, so that their contributions to sustainable community change can be measured and understood. For example, how might open lines of communication between neighbors contribute to a sustainable community? As Agyeman and Evans suggest, we may discover new alternatives and more effective strategies to address local problems should we look at environmental problems through a social justice lens and vice versa (Agyeman and Evans 159). The case study of CRJ within the context of West Belfast will demonstrate the possibilities of just such an approach.

At the heart of sustainable development lies the belief that social injustice is the real root of our present unsustainable society, posits Agyeman. “Sustainability is at least as much about politics, injustice, and inequality as it is about science or the environment,” he suggests (Agyeman 43). To support this theory, Agyeman endorses four key points made by other sustainability studies. First, as originally outlined by Polese and Stern (2000:15), in order to be environmentally sustainable, cities must first be socially sustainable. This means, as argued by Middleton and O’Keefe (2001:16), that any analysis or measurement

of development must begin not with symptoms of underdevelopment, but with the cause of instability—namely, social injustice. Any new theories of sustainability that this new perspective gives rise to will perhaps be more meaningful for what they reveal about politics more than ecology, as Hempel (1999:43) asserts. Finally, Agyeman quotes Adger's (2002:1716) belief that inequality is the most significant barrier to sustainable development: "It [inequality] is a barrier because of its interaction with individual's lifestyles and because it prevents socially acceptable implementation of collective planning for sustainability" (42-3). Such is the thrust of EJ—that unequal access to things like education and employment, as well as to financial and political resources act as barriers to the achievement of one's full potential and limit a person's ability to fully participate in society.

Just sustainability in practice: Community Restorative Justice as a driver of transformative change

When read in the context of the recent history of the north of Ireland, all of the theories discussed in this chapter provide a theoretical framework in which the work of Community Restorative Justice as a catalyst for transformative change can best be understood. "A process of deliberate, democratic civic renewal and enhanced civic engagement is seen by many, including myself, as essential to the process of developing sustainable communities," writes Agyeman (68). The daily changing nature of post-conflict Ireland as the peace process continues to unfold creates an atmosphere in which such purposeful activities are able to take place.

The next chapter begins with an overview of sustainable development in Ireland, and emphasizes local and national governmental and institutional support for this agenda. I also discuss the relationship between just sustainability and citizen empowerment and reflect on the community roots of sustainability, and explore the role that an organization like CRJ can play in furthering urban environmental and sustainability goals.

ⁱ Conca describes the enormity of the transformation necessary by comparing it with the origins of the modern nation-state system or the global system of colonialism.

Chapter Three: Understanding Justice and Sustainability as Rooted in the Community

Conceptualizing and articulating visions of sustainability that center locally based understandings of positive environmental change and citizen participation are necessary first steps toward the development of sustainable communities. The importance of a bottom-up visioning process—and the articulation of who has the power to frame the sustainable development agenda—cannot be underestimated. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Warpole (1998) underscores the importance of fleshing out a new urban environmental ethic. Such a process, he writes, would begin with the needs and understandings of communities and then work outwards to incorporate broader understandings of environmental and so-called green issues (151). Such an elaboration must necessarily be supported and reinforced at the government and institutional levels. Fortunately, recent publications on sustainable development strategy that focus on the island of Ireland as a whole, or on the north of Ireland in particular, support holistic and innovative conceptions of sustainable development that link economic, social and environmental sustainability. In addition, each communicates the significance of citizen participation as a fundamental component of a sustainable community.

“A la carte is inappropriate”

Comhar—Sustainable Development Council (Comhar SDC) is based in the Republic of Ireland and is made up of twenty-five members who come from a variety of sectors, including the government, environmental and social or community NGO’s, professionals and academics, and the economic sector. Created in 1999, Comhar serves as the national forum for consultation and the exchange of ideas on all issues related to sustainable development. Its terms of reference, as defined by the Irish government, are as follows:

- Advance the national agenda for sustainable development;
- Evaluate progress in this regard;
- Assist in devising suitable mechanisms and advising on their implementation;
- and
- Contribute to the formation of a national consensus in these regards (“Terms”).

Due to the broad nature of participants in the council and its government mandate, the council is very influential in steering the national perspective on sustainable development.

In 2002, Comhar published a primer entitled “Principles of Sustainable Development” to be used as a guide for making national sustainable development policy in Ireland. The report begins with a discussion of the concept of sustainable development, recognizing how difficult it is to pin down and define. The authors point out that the oft-mentioned Brundtland definition, though useful as a starting point for analysis, is not quite relevant or practical, and set out to develop the concept a bit further for those reasons—as well as to place the concept within an Irish context (2-3).

According to Comhar, sustainable development is a process in which environmental protection, economic development and social development are mutually reinforcing and are addressed on an equal footing. In practice, this means that even if advances are made in one of the three areas, if the other two are not also equally addressed, the system as a whole may be undermined; the idea is to pursue as much as possible a harmonious balance. “An *a la carte* approach to the principles is not appropriate,” the authors write. “All must be pursued, and in tandem” (“Principles” 3).

The framework devised by Comhar is expressed in seven broad themes, which are then broken down into twelve guiding principles (see Appendix E). Though each principle reflects a particular facet of sustainable development, they are inter-dependent by definition. One key theme or area of focus is social equity. Principle Eight states, “Social inclusion should be promoted to ensure an improved quality of life for all” (“Principles” 21). Social cohesion is believed to be an integral part of sustainable development, and the authors consider it to be a pre-requisite to long-term planning. Here, the significance, meaning and justification of the principle reflect the core values of environmental justice—that everyone has the right to make a living and enjoy a good quality of life. The identification and removal of social and economic barriers is key (“Principles” 21).

Good decision-making is another theme. Principle Eleven states “Good decision-making should be devolved to the appropriate level” (“Principles” 27). Here, the authors acknowledge the importance of the ownership of decision-making—something that is

central to any level of understanding, not only of the work of Community Restorative Justice, but of the Environmental Justice and Just Sustainability paradigms. In other words, those who are most affected must have the opportunity to and be empowered by their participation in the decisions that affect their every day lives. The authors explain the importance of this principle, "The emergence of area-based local development partnership structures has taken place in the context of a growing realisation that globally, nationally and locally that to be sustainable, development should bring about not only an improvement in social and physical conditions but must also contribute to an improvement in the capacity of people and communities to control and sustain those conditions" ("Principles" 27).

Stakeholder participation, the subject of Principle Twelve, goes hand in hand with devolved decision-making, and must also be promoted at all levels. "Progress towards sustainable development," the authors assert, "requires cooperation and consensus and the participation of all actors in society, including civil society" ("Principles" 29). According to Comhar, stakeholder participation is essential in order to bring about the level of change necessary to really make a difference, as well as to ensure that the environment and social equity are included with society's economic concerns. Some of the benefits of participation include an increased awareness and understanding—which in turn brings action—and the building of partnerships and the establishment of trust ("Principles" 29).

Sustainable development is a process

A research project on local sustainable development on the island of Ireland undertaken by the Centre for Cross Border Studies reviewed sustainable development policy in an all-island context, and used four case studies to demonstrate how such policy might be implemented locally. One important conclusion that the authors came away with was the role that "environmental citizenship" can play in transitioning communities toward sustainability—particularly in historically divided areas like parts of the north of Ireland (Ellis, Motherway, Neill and Hand 53). Here, the concept of "environmental citizenship" is explained as a reinvigoration of democracy at the local level, in which people come together to consciously create and build upon shared notions of civic responsibility (Ellis,

Motherway, Neill and Hand 22-3). Nurturing environmental citizenship in areas of conflict, the authors put forth, may provide a foundation on which to build more substantive benefits.

The researchers argue that the path to sustainability should be seen as a political process with citizenship at its center. The report submits that sustainable development implies a strengthened sense of shared responsibility, which in practice should lead those involved in dialogues or local partnerships to be better able to understand and respond to one another's needs. Participation in deliberative visioning processes, such as the creation of a Local Agenda/Local Action 21, can result in increased community cohesion and provide different perspectives on the role of governance. "Local sustainability should be seen in its broader context, not just as being related to discrete areas of environmental protection or social inclusion, but as a way of extending democratic involvement that can foster common ethical concerns..." argue the researchers (Ellis, Motherway, Neill and Hand 23).

One of the four case studies included in the Centre for Cross Border Studies' research project focuses on an organization located in the north of Ireland. Groundwork NI's mission is to build sustainable communities in marginalized areas by linking economic and social regeneration with environmental concerns. Their stated purpose is "changing places, changing lives, changing minds," and their vision of the future is of "a shared society made up of sustainable, inclusive, cohesive communities, which are healthy and safe and which respect the environment in which people live and prosper" ("About Our Organization"). Amongst Groundwork's core values are the importance of local decision-making, building partnerships, and promoting equality and diversity in everything that they do. Groundwork NI appears to be an organization that would easily fit into the Just Sustainability paradigm, and is a good example of a group that fosters joined-up thinking on economic, social and environmental concerns.

Groundwork NI does a lot of work in Belfast in interface areas, or areas along the "peacelines" where working-class Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods meet. Groundwork's projects in interface areas aim to build community self-confidence in these difficult and sometimes violent parts of the city by using environmental themes and utilizing local staff from both communities to create a common identity and meaning

(Ellis, Motherway, Neill and Hand 52). Some of the activities employed include local history projects, neighborhood clean-ups, mural painting and tree planting. Given the “difficult context of cultural animosity” in interface areas and all of the external factors (such as the development of the peace process, political factors and so forth), the researchers note, it is hard to measure the precise impact of Groundwork’s contributions to cross-community solidarity building. However, the rate of ethnic violence at the interface studied for the report did dramatically decline during the period covered in the case study; researchers infer that Groundwork’s efforts certainly played a positive role in that regard (Ellis, Motherway, Neill and Hand 52-3).

One key conclusion of the Centre for Cross Border Studies report lies in the potential of facilitating dialogue between different groups through enhanced civic awareness. According to the authors, combining innovative methods with changes in local political relationships nurtures “cultures of participation” (Ellis, Motherway, Neill and Hand 54-5). The work of groups like Groundwork NI and Community Restorative Justice seek to engage members of the local community and encourage them to work together to build community identity and meaning through facilitation and local participation. Both groups aim to rebuild relationships and empower people through their participation.

“Sustainable development in NI is the peace process”ⁱⁱ

At the heart of sustainable development, argues Julian Agyeman, lies “the fundamental acknowledgment of social justice as the root of our current unsustainability” (Agyeman 43). Inequality, injustice and politics are just as important to our understanding of sustainable development as are science and the environment, Agyeman asserts. As discussed previously, the north of Ireland—and West Belfast in particular—provides a unique context in which to discuss the role of peace with justice in conceptualizations of sustainable development due to the challenges presented by the recent conflict and its aftermath. The legacy of the conflict has left a thriving community sector in many areas, yet pockets of deprivation continue to exist, leaving quality of life and equality of opportunity as formidable challenges to progress in the creation of sustainable communities.

Such obstacles are recognized in the government report entitled “Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland: First Steps Toward Sustainability,” issued by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) in 2006. The report acknowledges that reducing inequalities is central to the development of sustainable communities, and articulates the notion that those communities that are the most economically and socially marginalized also suffer from the most degraded natural and built environments—a relationship even more adversely impacted by the conflict. “The disparity has been exacerbated by decades of sectarian conflict, which has divided communities at a time when they should be uniting to face the bigger challenges of the future,” the report states (68).

The government’s plan, according to the report, is to assist in the creation of sustainable communities that epitomize the principles of sustainability at the local level. Government action in this regard is geared toward facilitating community partnerships; allowing for more influence and power at the community level for decisions that affect people’s everyday lives; improving access to education; encouraging the development of social economies; and encouraging a healthy natural environment (OFMDFM 68). The Sustainable Development Strategy outlines its vision of the ideal sustainable community as one that balances and integrates environmental, economic and social aspects of the neighborhood, and outlines three strategic objectives designed to lead to such a reality:

- To increase the economic well-being of the people of Northern Ireland
- To create an attractive, high quality environment where people feel safe and which provides the conditions for health and social well-being
- To promote the development of community engagement, civic leadership, and responsible citizenship (72-3).

Strategic Objective Three underscores the aforementioned importance of citizen participation at the community level. One of the key targets outlined by the OFMDFM to achieve this objective is to “build capacity in disadvantaged communities to develop the active participation of local people in achieving positive change” (77). The language used by the OFMDFM in describing necessary next steps to achieve their goals is important; phrases like “community control,” “promote active citizenship,” “constructive and effective participation,” “engage and empower local people,” and “improve quality

of and access to information” serve to reinforce the idea that the highest offices of government in the north are forward-thinking and are committed to developing the kinds of partnerships that are necessary to bring about real, substantive changes in sustainable development at the local, regional and national level.

The challenge of government, then, as described by the OFMDFM, is to continue to evolve and to develop a culture of leadership, innovation, and transparency, in which citizens are able to make tangible contributions and to expect democratic accountability. The OFMDFM notes the central importance of Environmental Justice to its goals:

The environmental justice agenda affects both urban and rural communities and it seeks to put people at the centre of the environment. It recognizes that it is often the poorest and least powerful people who live in or near to areas of environmental degradation. In developing the environmental justice agenda, further research into environmental inequalities is needed. We will explore ways in which individuals and communities can enjoy a better quality of life by living in clean and healthy environments (124).

Here, the government makes a commitment to explore new avenues for participatory decision-making, combined with the concepts of environmental justice and active citizenship, with the goal of increasing awareness, understanding, and action around the development of sustainable communities.

Indeed, the new power-sharing government, installed in 2007 and currently led by First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, provides a unique opportunity for just the sort of transformative visioning process that true sustainable development requires—especially one that centers community relations and has full support at the Executive level. Respondents to a survey on the most significant sustainable development initiatives in the north of Ireland highlighted the critical nature of Local Strategy Partnerships/Community Safety Partnerships and community relations policy. Local Strategy Partnerships between local authorities and community members display the “truly integrative value of sustainable development” (Ellis, Motherway, Neill and Hand 80) while Community Safety Partnerships address security concerns and are also integral to success. Another respondent said that community relations policy is key because: “Sustainable development in Northern Ireland is the Peace Process” (Ellis, Motherway, Neill and Hand 80).

The community roots of sustainable development

How does one create a situation where people have the ability to develop alternatives built on foundations of solidarity? In a place that is emerging from decades of conflict, repairing relationships and cultivating mutual cooperation among neighbors and between neighborhoods must be a primary goal. Father Des Wilson is a community activist who has been living in working in West Belfast since 1966. Wilson explains the importance of emphasizing a people-centered approach to community building:

There is as much a crisis of self-confidence in Northern Ireland today as there is a crisis of authority. We have to raise the morale of areas in Northern Ireland which are not only economically but mentally and spiritually depressed. The first stepping stone to better Community Relations is the development of communities which are accepted at their own evaluation...The result should be a raising of morale of the district, a new conviction on the part of the people that they are able to manage their own affairs very much better than they thought, and a feeling that at last they have something to offer. They cease to be afraid of themselves or of others (85).

Though the threat of violence may be over, memories of conflict and loss continue, impeding people's ability to trust one another and live together in peace. In addition, peace agreements most often focus on combatants and political parties (United Nations 6-11). The UN Commission on Human Security promotes a "capability approach" for areas emerging from conflict, in which each person has the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential (United Nations 30). A people-centered approach requires empowerment strategies that would enable people to develop their own methods to facilitate positive change. The Commission concludes that this is a fundamental way to advance the security: "Development advances freedom when it advances people's capabilities and choices so that they can participate actively in all spheres of life" (United Nations 131). In fact, the first question one must necessarily ask before beginning any new activity aimed at increasing security is, "How does this activity build on the efforts and capabilities of those directly affected" (United Nations 11)?

The notion of "community" is integrally related to concepts of social justice. To build justice and democracy from the ground up—particularly in a post-conflict society like the north of Ireland—one must focus on improving a community's capacity to deal

with its own issues; to empower individuals to change contexts and create new approaches to solving problems. Active citizens broaden their political consciousness as they come together to confront social problems and improve their living conditions and quality of life in the process (Warburton 63).

What does the word “community” mean for sustainable development? Is it defined by shared locality, shared experience, or shared visions of the future? Many of the individuals interviewed for this thesis referenced the term as describing a defined geographical area, such as the community of West Belfast. Most stated that they belonged to many different kinds of communities—from the community of family, the street or neighborhood, or the republican/nationalist community. Neighborhood Renewal activist Callie Persic remarked that the term was quite “slippery” in the north of Ireland, though people use it all the time, both to define who they are and who they are not (Persic). Community Restorative Justice volunteer John Allsopp stated, “Well, community I think is basically people who live in an area who I believe should be coming together to make the place better for all. And I believe that communities should have the right tools there to better themselves” (Allsopp).

Writer and researcher Diane Warburton defines community as an aspiration based on caring relationships in a shared place, and posits that it is the very relationships people have with one another and their environments that give a particular community its power and meaning (18). Warburton writes, “Community is not a thing, it is a dynamic process in which a shared commitment creates and recreates community through action by people who are aware and committed to the principle of working together for a better life and world” (18). Nowhere is this more important than in a post-conflict society like the north of Ireland. This definition suits the nationalist community of West Belfast, and as such forms the basis of the use of the term in this thesis.

Social capital in West Belfast

“The wider political conflict in Northern Ireland facilitated the development of bonding social capital, while the peace process provided opportunities for bridging social capital to strengthen and develop,” claims Queens University sociologist Madeleine Leonard (927). According to Leonard, the term “social capital” is difficult to define; she cites

three leading sociologists to illustrate the meaning of the term. Putnam (2000: 19) describes social capital as referring to social networks, or connections between people, that give rise to norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness (928). Sociologists Coleman (1988: S98) and Bourdieu (1986: 243), Leonard explains, define social capital as a resource that individuals can use as the means to produce a variety of beneficial ends—such as economic capital that can encourage and extend investment in disadvantaged areas (928). “Bonding” social capital occurs within homogeneous populations (such as Catholic West Belfast), while “bridging” social capital is explained as that which connects or ties one community with others in wider society (Leonard 929-30).

Leonard carried out an ethnographic study of informal economic networks in Catholic West Belfast in part to counter an assertion by Putnam that marginalized areas experiencing high levels of poverty and adult unemployment and other markers of disadvantage—though arguably desperately in need of social capital to survive—tend to be the same areas that display a fundamental lack of the social capital necessary to mitigate against that disadvantage. Leonard believed that while that may have been the case in some areas of the United Kingdom, the wider political situation—the history and local experience of the conflict—created a dramatically different set of circumstances in Catholic West Belfast. From all appearances, said Leonard, the area looked as though it would be an area lacking in social capital, yet her research suggested otherwise:

Rather the research uncovered a vibrant community with strong network ties and social and economic support structures. Community inhabitants were involved in a host of informal economic activities including working while claiming welfare benefits, self-help, family, kinship and friendship networks, reciprocity and volunteering (931).

What made Belfast different, Leonard asked? The conflict, Leonard argued, had “beneficial consequences” in that it enabled residents of marginalized areas to channel their frustration with their quality of life to the Protestant-controlled government at Stormont and to the British State. Communities gained strength through their social networks, and this strength allowed them to challenge the discriminatory actions and policies of the State and their inability to provide basic necessities to their communities. Leonard explains that bonding social capital emerged as a political strategy, rather than simply of way of surviving disadvantage. Residents of areas like Catholic West Belfast

were therefore better equipped to understand the role of the State in creating their situation, rather than internalizing blame (Leonard 932-33). Recall the respondent to the Centre for Cross Border Studies' survey, who stated that "sustainable development in Northern Ireland is the peace process." In contemporary Belfast, Leonard's research points out, the peace process creates the structure necessary for communities to use their bonding social capital to reach out to other communities, and the process of bridging social capital commences (932-33).

Leonard's research is supported by the perspectives of many West Belfast-based community activists. Father Des Wilson's view echoes the conclusions of Leonard's study. Wilson recognized the unique way in which many neighborhoods responded to the political situation and the lack of resources provided to their communities:

One way to understand what happened in the north of Ireland is to think of a constant creation of alternatives by people in crisis. They created alternative education, alternative welfare, alternative theatre, broadcasting, theological and political discussion, public inquiries and much else. They also created at various times alternative police and alternative armies. The authorities who had power over these in the past were and still are engaged in an equally constant struggle to regain total control of them. With only limited success, fortunately (128).

In an interview for this thesis, activist Liam Stone (of the Upper Springfield Development Trust) described the incredible amount of social capital in his community, and the important role that personal relationships have played over the years. There are some issues that can be planned out, he explained, such as bad lighting or the shape of streets. Other issues, Stone declared, can only be dealt with by building on personal relationships—an area which could always benefit from more effort. Stone underscored the importance of the context in which relationships are nurtured or destroyed—particularly for West Belfast, an area composed primarily of nationalists living in a unionist-controlled State. The community had no relationship or affiliation with the police services, for example, and were historically regarded at best as an irritant or a hindrance; at worst, the police actually plotted to imprison and kill citizens of the community. Despite this context, Stone stressed, nationalist West Belfast did not implode as a community (Liam Stone).

But why, and how, did West Belfast not implode as a community, despite decades of often violent political conflict? Stone has an explanation for this—something he often

refers to as “the Black Mountain Syndrome”—and it becomes more and more apparent every time an outsider comes into the community. The Black Mountain forms a natural backdrop behind the western part of the city of Belfast. Stone explains:

[Visitors] look at the setting of the Black Mountain and go, “Wonderful, really wonderful location.” And us who live in this area, we look over our shoulders and go, “Aye, the Black Mountain.” And just take it for granted—the same is just highlighted to us about personal relationships. Because anyone who comes in sees the interaction between local people and we just take that for granted. We just think that takes place in all other communities. *But it doesn't!* It doesn't. We just take that there social bonding for granted, but it doesn't happen in other communities (Liam Stone).

It is precisely the relationships Stone describes that have kept places like West Belfast from “imploding” as a community throughout the conflict, and that keep local activists involved in working to create change in their neighborhoods. Such community roots are necessary for local peace, justice, and sustainability initiatives to survive and be effective.

Restoring trust, repairing relationships and rebuilding landscapes

The community of West Belfast reacted to the dynamics of the political situation in the north of Ireland by creating a unique and innovative voluntary and community sector in order to provide much needed resources and to get things done (qtd. in McEvoy and Mika 551). Now that the violence has ended and the government is being reconfigured, the strategic values of peace and justice as foundations for sustainable communities must be recognized. How might the community of West Belfast continue to grow, to bond and to bridge as the political context changes?

“The corrosive effects of violence and injustice are one of the principal forces undermining what sense of community we still have and inhibit the construction of a sense of community on a broader scale,” argues University of Maryland Professor Ken Conca (“Peace, Justice” 27). The transition from a violent political struggle to a cease fire and a process of peace-building inspired many community members to rethink some of the systems that were in place in the community during the decades of conflict—particularly the use of punishment violence to deal with crime and anti-social behavior.

The peace process has served as a catalyst for change as well as personal empowerment, propelling community members and activists to completely transform

relationships of power through their involvement in community renewal efforts, explain Kieran McEvoy and Harry Mika. They describe the changes they have witnessed through their research, and point to former paramilitaries who have embraced restorative justice values and practice. Attitudes amongst community activists have changed, too. “Communities which have until recently demanded ever more violent punishments against anti-social offenders [are] now making use of restorative projects and accepting back into the community those who were previously banished or severely punished...” write McEvoy and Mika (553).

Though community-based restorative justice projects alone may not have the power to reverse core structural imbalances that lead to criminality, the researchers support Merry and Miller’s position (1993: 9) that restorative justice can “entrench and reinforce changes already occurring in segments of society or consolidate changes accomplished through other forms of political transformation” (qtd. in McEvoy and Mika 556). The following chapter tells the story of the formation of Community Restorative Justice Ireland, how its relationship with agents of the state has evolved over the years, and details the experience of its many volunteers throughout the process. The connections between the role of CRJ within the community and the establishment of the groundwork for sustainability will be emphasized throughout.

ⁱ (“Principles”, 3).

ⁱⁱ (Ellis, Motherway, Neill and Hand 80).

Chapter Four: Peace-Building on the Ground: Community Restorative Justice and Sustainable Development

The tipping point

Shortly before midnight on Tuesday, September 11, 2007, 65-year-old West Belfast greengrocer Harry Holland was brutally attacked as he attempted to prevent a group of teenagers from stealing his delivery van. One of the teens subsequently stabbed him in the head with a screwdriver. Holland died soon thereafter from his injuries. Three local teenagers—one fifteen-year-old girl and two seventeen-year-old boys—were initially arrested in relation to the killing (“Teenage Girl”). One of the boys would later confess to his role in the murder and receive just twelve years; the murder charges were dropped against the other two participants, with the boy being sentenced to four years for attempted affray and the girl released on probation (McAleese).

The outpouring of grief for the loss of Holland—a pillar of the local community—and support for his family was immediate. “Harry Holland was a personification of all that is good in that part of our city: a hard-working, warm, generous family man with a profound sense of the close community that surrounded him,” stated a local resident in an editorial the day after the murder (“Viewpoint”). Over one thousand people showed up for a vigil the following day to demonstrate solidarity with the Holland family and to condemn the brutality of the “murderous gangsters,” “thugs,” and “feral children” responsible for the attack. First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness also responded by issuing statements that reflected the shock and sorrow of the entire community (“Executive tribute”).

After the initial shock of the tragedy of Holland’s death set in, local residents called the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to task for their failure to respond effectively to the needs of the predominantly nationalist West Belfast community. Particularly vociferous in this regard was Belfast Media Group publisher Máirtín Ó Muilleoir, who criticized the PSNI for not considering tackling anti-social behavior in West Belfast to be a priority, and for not understanding the needs of the nationalist community. Ó Muilleoir lambasted the PSNI for denying the existence of a crime crisis in West Belfast on his blog, “From the Balcony: A Publisher’s Blog”:

...the PSNI and the RUC before it has been divorced from this community for 40 years. But it's also because the PSNI has a culture of excuses. There's always something or someone to blame when the job can't be done: lack of resources or that old canard, community not proactive enough in assisting the police.

They can show me all the damn statistics they want and I'll show them the body of Harry Holland. There is a crime crisis in West Belfast and the PSNI should listen to their 'customers', the community, and remove the savages from the streets—not serve up pathetic and clearly preposterous claims of an improving policing environment (“If the PSNI”).

Similar sentiments were echoed by Sinn Féin President and West Belfast MP Gerry Adams at the Holland family vigil; Adams called the Holland murder a “killing waiting to happen” (Thornton). The view of the local community, he said, is that the people who carry out these crimes and engage in anti-social behavior are allowed to do so with impunity precisely due to the failure of the police to respond effectively to community concerns and to deliver on their commitment to improve relations through good policing. To counteract the fear that events like these often inspire, Adams called on those gathered at the vigil to stand up for the safety of the community and to work together to rid the streets of criminals: “This community was not cowed by decades of military occupation and repression. We will not be put down or dictated to by the thugs who murdered Harry Holland. We are ready and willing to stand against them” (“Sinn Féin”).

Despite PSNI reports of a decrease in the number of violent attacks, residents say that life on the ground tells a different story, as exemplified in an attempted carjacking in broad daylight on the Falls Road in 2007. An armed teenager, known to be part of a local gang called the “Rugrats,” ran amok in the street, brandishing a weapon for 45 minutes before stopping a car at gunpoint in an attempt to steal it. He was subsequently punched and tackled by an eyewitness. Though the police were called 30 minutes before the carjacking took place, they did not consider the imminent threat a priority, and did not respond. The “Rugrats” are allegedly responsible for a string of crimes in the Ballymurphy neighborhood of West Belfast, ranging from burglaries to assaults to petrol bombings. Most members have few if any convictions, causing locals to believe that at best, the police are not interested in protecting their community, and at worst, the gang members are working as paid informants for the police service (Barnes, “Thug waves”).

As it turned out, the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) decided not to press charges against the young person involved in the carjacking, citing lack of evidence—despite CCTV footage, mobile phone recordings of the attempted hijacking and at least four witnesses. Locals were flabbergasted. “What is the point in people coming forward and giving witness statements? How can anyone be encouraged to go to the PSNI after this?” demanded Seán Osbourne, the community worker who disarmed the attempted hijacker (Barnes, “Beyond belief”). After an investigation into the incident, the Police Ombudsman’s office found that the PSNI took forty-five minutes to respond to the 999 call, did not get out of their unmarked car upon arrival at the scene, and left after sixteen minutes without identifying themselves to witnesses (Barnes, “Beyond belief”).

It is no surprise then, given the crisis of criminality that continues to go unchecked in this particular community, that residents are frustrated and angry. Though there are some who craved vigilante action (Thornton), others, like Monsignor Tom Toner, called for a more meaningful police presence on West Belfast streets and pleaded with the youth of the community to turn their backs on criminality. Holland’s murder, Toner posited, raises serious questions about what is happening with the young people in the community, parental responsibility, and the state of the criminal justice system. He believes the murder has a message for community youth, and so challenged them to respond:

We know that not all of you are car thieves, or thugs, or druggies or potential murderers. But, please, do not let yourselves be tarred with the brush of the few who are. Have courage. Be strong. Don’t be one of the lowlife cowards. Say ‘no’ to the thugs. Say ‘no’ to the loutish behaviour and the criminal activity (McManus).

Whether or not the Holland case will be the tipping point in the effort to rid the streets of the criminal elements (Ó Muilleoir, “Let’s take back”) or to reclaim the youth that have gone astray, it has certainly proven to be a defining moment in the budding partnership between West Belfast (and the nationalist community at large) and the PSNI. The community’s collective response to the murder demonstrates the belief that their articulated desire for a stronger policing presence in their community went unheeded, resulting in the unnecessary death of an upstanding local family man. It has not been long since Sinn Féin signed onto the Policing Board in an effort to hold the PSNI to account, and though community engagement with the police may be expected to be a gradual and

lengthy process after a decades-long conflict (Thornton), given the historical experience of the embattled West Belfast community at the hands of the police, the onus for critical engagement must be placed on the shoulders of the PSNI.

Though the PSNI claimed crime statistics in West Belfast were down, within six months of the Holland murder, in February 2008 thirty-year-old resident John Mongan, a member of the Travelling community, was hacked to death with knives, a hatchet and a baseball bat in front of his pregnant wife, who was also attacked (“Mongan”). The following month, former IRA prisoner and highly regarded community member Frank “Bap” McGreevy (51) was beaten with a pickaxe in front of his home, and died soon afterwards in the hospital. “West rocked by horror attack,” read the lead story of the *Andersonstown News* (“West rocked”)—the succession of murders in the West Belfast community had left residents reeling. At a republican commemoration in Milltown Cemetery shortly after the McGreevy killing, Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams told the gathered crowd that the PSNI are not up to the job of policing West Belfast (“Residents”).

The question remains as to how the PSNI will emerge from this “defining moment” to make real progress on their commitment to change and accountable, community policing. These recent events show that the police service is not working hard enough to engage with the community, and their failure to adequately control the criminality crisis in West Belfast and the subsequent community response underscore the lingering feelings of mistrust, anger and frustration this particular community has for the police service. It is important to note here just how far the community had come in the short time since Sinn Féin and the nationalist community decided to sign on to policing. Residents of West Belfast—a community that had never experienced an accountable police service—were responding to crime by calling out for a responsive police service.

The onus was now on the police service to get things under control, asserted publisher Ó Muilleoir on his blog. The community was united in their condemnation of the killings and in their desire to get the “thugs” off the streets for good. Ó Muilleoir wrote:

Indeed, one would expect nothing less of an extraordinary community which went through a 30-year nightmare to assert its right to justice but the question has to be asked: is this now the peace dividend they are to receive?

If the last ten years since the Good Friday Agreement — and the three decades of struggle before that — are to mean anything, then the answer to that question, which must be shouted from every rooftop is, "Definitely not" ("Action").

Though the police had failed to protect residents like Holland and McGreevy, if deployed effectively under the right leadership, the PSNI should be able to make a difference in West Belfast (Ó Muilleoir, "Action").

This society *needs* a police service

Though the decision by Sinn Féin and the nationalist people in 2007 to sign on to policing was indeed historic, one cannot underestimate what the decision meant, in practical terms, to the average man and woman living in a place like West Belfast. As Jim Gibney wrote in the *Irish News*, to support such a decision would require nationalists to put the peace process before their personal or community experience (Gibney). "This community has never had a police service before—not an accountable police service. It's been policed, for political reasons," commented Dr. Laurence McKeown, a former IRA prisoner who currently helps to run Coiste naIarchimí, an umbrella organization that supports republican ex-prisoners and their families (McKeown). Though many would agree that the acceptance of the PSNI was the first step towards ensuring its accountability to nationalist communities, it would require an enormous shift in thinking for most people to interact with the PSNI as a police service. It would not happen overnight, and there would be many who would never be able to call the police for help.

In an interview with me before the policing decision was made, Francis Stone, a community organizer for the Falls Community Council, discussed his own mistrust of the police yet emphasized how crucial it was for West Belfast to have a police service. Stone shuddered when he thought about what his relationship would be with the cops once the community signed on to policing. He doesn't like cops. Should the community decide to accept the PSNI would be a "wait and see" situation for Stone. He explained:

They say that, like, the "ordinary decent cop"—I've found I haven't seen one. People say look, they're peacefully doing their job. I haven't seen one policeperson doing their job. What we've seen is a community being policed, a community being battered by these people. Being shot by these people. Being set up under collusion with loyalist groups by these people (Francis Stone).

Stone grew up in Ballymurphy, a ward in West Belfast that is one of the most deprived in the whole of the north of Ireland. Ballymurphy suffered tremendously during the war; the neighborhood was pillaged by the British, and Stone witnessed the murder of many friends and neighbors over the years. Despite his personal experience—or perhaps because of it—Stone sees an accountable police force as an absolutely necessary next step for the community. He knows how hard it will be for the community to actually start using the PSNI as well:

But I also know that this society *needs* a police service. This society has been policed for over fifty years, do you know what I mean? And this hasn't been a two-way interaction. Our society has been ruled, you know. And that's just our experiences. And so there's a lot of hurt there, there's a lot of mistrust towards the police. A lot of our people have that (Francis Stone).

As for the future of an improved relationship with the police—it's all in the way they respond to the community, Stone insists. Judging from the response of the PSNI to crime in the West Belfast community since 2007, the road to a sustainable relationship built upon trust will be long and arduous. Though change will certainly not happen overnight, many thought the day would never come when community members would be encouraged to call the police for help. It was only a short time ago when residents relied on more informal methods of social control, choosing instead to call on the IRA to deal with local crime and anti-social behavior.

Paramilitary punishment violence and the roots of Community Restorative Justice

“Any revolutionary or guerilla movement will understand that while the revolution is a fish, the community that it survives in is the sea,” explained Harry Maguire. “And for a state to then try to break that community—to try to break resistance within that community—is about trying to poison the sea” (“An Introduction”). Maguire was referring to the context in which the Irish Republican Army came to be the de facto policing service for the nationalist community after the RUC left. A common counter-insurgency technique, Maguire explained, was through criminality and anti-social behavior. If you have a community that is divided and trying to deal with these types of issues, he pointed out, then their power of resistance is diminished. Members of the

nationalist community sought guidance and protection from paramilitary groups because they had come to be regarded as community defenders. Though reluctant to fulfill a policing role, the IRA would eventually give way to community pressure and assume responsibility for community policing (Maguire, “An Introduction”).

“We had an acceptable police force, but it was called the IRA,” contends Liam Stone. “My research among republicans has indicated to me that dealing with community justice issues was the very last thing that they wanted to be dealing with—the very last thing” (Liam Stone). The IRA finally relented after considerable community pressure, and given the political and military context of the time, they were, in a manner of speaking, forced to assume the role. Stone explained, “The IRA would’ve seen themselves as a revolutionary guerilla movement—so they would’ve believed that the community issues were best dealt with by the community” (Liam Stone). Considering the political context and the war situation, however, those lines were easily blurred. In nationalist areas, the IRA were seen as guardians of the community, so it made sense at the time that those in need of protection would approach them.

The conflict gave rise to systems of informal justice on both sides of the community in the north, with republican and loyalist paramilitaries taking on policing roles in their respective communities, discuss scholars Kieran McEvoy and Harry Mika. They explain that the lack of legitimacy of the police service—particularly in nationalist communities—created a political vacuum that led residents to turn to local paramilitaries to “do something” about crime in the community (McEvoy and Mika 536). The methods used included social exclusion, punishment beatings and shootings, and in republican/nationalist communities, it was the IRA that usually carried out these actions. McEvoy and Mika describe the process:

A distinct IRA section entitled ‘the civil administration’ was established to hear complaints of criminality or anti-social activity from the local community, conduct investigations and carry out the designated punishment. A tariff system specified the gradations of physical punishment (536).

The problem of punishment beatings, according to McEvoy and Mika, has been one of the most challenging aspects of the peace process. Indeed, though perhaps difficult to accept, the use of punishment violence was very popular in communities as a means of quick and unmistakable “justice” (McEvoy and Mika 536).

According to McEvoy and Mika, a number of political developments were to encourage members of the community to move away from their reliance on punishment beatings and would create the conditions necessary to adopt a system of restorative justice. Though the paramilitary ceasefires of 1994 and 1997 referred only to an end to military operations (and not policing), they did give more prominence to the issue of punishment violence. The signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 established several bodies that would influence criminal justice policy: the Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission, the Sentence Review Commission (which would have the responsibility of releasing most of the political prisoners held at that time), the independent Patten Commission on Policing, and a review of the criminal justice system led by the civil service (McEvoy and Mika 535).

The resulting period of political negotiations gave rise to much debate and discussion at the community level about punishment violence: was it working? Was it right? Should it be changed or done away with? What needs to be put in its place? (Maguire, “An Introduction”). In 1996, republican activists—some with inside knowledge of the IRA’s civil administration unit (McEvoy and Mika 537)—approached academics, human rights activists, criminologists and youth workers in order to broaden the debate. There was widespread agreement that it was time for an alternative, though most had no idea what form that alternative would take. The authors of what would become the framework for Community Restorative Justice explained:

While many individuals...and organizations have expressed their implacable opposition to such activities, there have been comparatively few concrete proposals as to what could be used to supplant the violent systems which have evolved in Republican and Loyalist areas. Often, critics of punishment beatings and shootings had little to suggest by way of an alternative other than a reliance upon the formal criminal justice system. As critical academics and criminal justice practitioners with a shared view of the limitations of *any* formal justice system, this appeared to us an inadequate response to the clear need for more effective responses to anti-social crime (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie X).

As a first step, the group developed a six-week training program that addressed a range of relevant issues, such as mediation and nonviolence, restorative justice, crime prevention and human rights.

According to Maguire, the academics and professionals who were involved quickly came to understand that the IRA was serious about wanting to find a nonviolent way forward. The IRA maintained that they were not a police service, and had never wanted to be a police service—it was a role that was imposed upon them by the community. “They [the IRA] were very open to change, and were able to point out over several periods of the conflict where they had tried to end punishment violence, but through pressures from the community were never able to extricate themselves from it,” Maguire said (“An Introduction”).

Following the training course, a residential was organized in the south of Ireland with the purpose of composing a discussion document that would broaden the debate and begin to move society closer to an alternative. Participants put together a draft framework of a community-based project based on the principles of restorative justice. The report, called “Designing a System of Restorative Community Justice in Northern Ireland,” and referred to as “the Blue Book,” was published in 1997 following a period of consultation with community members, the republican movement, and representatives of the British and Irish governments.

Funding was subsequently sought for four pilot projects, in the Twinbrook/Poleglass and Ballymurphy areas of West Belfast, in North Belfast, and in Derry. According to Maguire, the local response to funding proposals was “frosty” at first (“An Introduction”), but the necessary money for the pilot projects and a coordinator position was eventually received from the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders (McEvoy and Mika 537). Atlantic Philanthropies, a US-based philanthropic organization, would later become a major funder of restorative justice projects in the north of Ireland (Maguire, “An Introduction”).

A number of fundamental issues arose as soon as organizers began to develop the pilot projects. Though many in the community were in support of the new schemes, they still proved difficult to get off the ground because residents had grown accustomed to settling their problems in a particular way. Maguire pointed out that many people had grown comfortable with the idea of “shooting a problem,” rather than trying to find out and work on the underlying causes of that problem. “The community had become

comfortable with the armed groups doing the business for them,” he said. “That was seen as just okay” (“An Introduction”).

The reality was that the community had never experienced a proper policing service, so there was no actual conception of what a police service should be or how it should work (Maguire, “An Introduction”). For the community-based justice schemes to be effective, activists would have to work to change the “culture” or mindset of a large part of the community—to sell the idea of restorative justice not just as a viable alternative, but an alternative that was sustainable and would actually improve quality of life.

Fighting a war that happens in the street very quickly transforms young people’s minds in terms of how they view the world—so after living with violence for such a long period of time, Maguire explained, the community had grown increasingly comfortable with a reliance on punishment violence. The activists trying to organize a restorative justice scheme were faced with an enormous amount of work to try to turn residents on to the idea. Many a debate was held in nationalist neighborhoods where people would say, ‘shoot the people who are creating the problems,’ and organizers would respond by asking whether, though that has happened in the past, did it really serve them well as a community (Maguire, “An Introduction”)?

The answer was, of course, that no, punishment violence had not served the community well over the years, and Maguire and the activists that he worked with developed a way of approaching the issue that really got people thinking. For example, activists would ask the question, where does crime and anti-social behavior come from? Residents would most often point out that there were socio-economic reasons for the crime and anti-social behavior that occurred in their neighborhoods. “It was about poverty, it was about unemployment, it was about the education deficit or underachievement,” Maguire noted. “We had young people who had spent eleven years of their life going through the education system and leaving the education system at sixteen, not being able to read and write” (“An Introduction”).

The restorative justice organizers held community forums where they discussed the social context of their areas and how they might go about changing that context. Those who came out to learn more at the forums were asked questions designed to

generate thoughtful debate and discussion and help local citizens to approach their situation in a different way. A rhetorical question such as ‘can you shoot poverty?’ might be posed to encourage people to think about the fact that using a gun might deter an individual from repeating an offense, but it would not help to alleviate the social condition—such as poverty—that drove that individual to commit a crime in the first place. If you can’t shoot the cause, Maguire stressed, you need to find another way to change the context (“An Introduction”).

Other topics discussed at the community forums included an analysis of the traditional, formal system of criminal justice as employed in the Western world, and the individual community experience with the system as manifested in West Belfast throughout the conflict. You can’t jail poverty, you can’t put unemployment or the victims of social deprivation in prison—many aspects of the traditional criminal justice system, like the use of punishment violence, were not sustainable solutions, Maguire stressed (“An Introduction”). They are not really solutions at all, as they do not address any of the underlying causes of crime. A community-based restorative justice scheme was presented not as an alternative to a police force, but as a way to empower local people and involve them in the active betterment of their own neighborhoods. This way of looking at possible alternatives not only focused the debate on how individuals could make contributions to ending punishment violence, it allowed those present to understand that to adopt an effective system of restorative justice would have broader implications in terms of improving quality of life and community relations in the area. Maguire explained:

It led to a...much more international debate in terms of how do justice systems actually work? What ownership of justice systems do communities really have? What are the class interests that are operating along the lines of the justice systems (“An Introduction”)?

Restorative justice was presented as an alternative that could effectively deal with issues that the formal justice system could not and would not deal with. Proponents of restorative justice argued that the formal system was notoriously ineffective—particularly within the context of the recent war. Nationalist communities like West Belfast had long since been politicized, and took quickly to the ideas being presented at the forums. The day-to-day experiences of the average working class nationalist supported the idea that

real change would have to come from the bottom-up—particularly where policing and criminal justice is concerned. Most would agree that the criminal justice system, while ineffective at decreasing crime and increasing safety, was very effective at protecting the interests of the state. “It’s about protecting the interests of the establishment, which in reality doesn’t impact on crime, anti-social behavior, and the poverty and the issues that emanate from that—which communities like this experience,” said Maguire (“An Introduction”). Change would need to come from the grassroots, and it would have to incorporate quality of life issues.

“A lot of our societies tend to use the same processes—it’s about retribution, it’s about punishment—and we’re saying that’s no longer good enough,” declared Maguire. “We’re saying we want our communities to develop processes which are about reparation, which are about empathy, which are about resolution—but let’s look at the whole issue” (“An Introduction”).

How would community involvement in restorative justice work help to change the dynamics of the traditional justice system? Would this approach to problem solving not only make the streets safer, but could it make the community more whole? For the nationalist community to resolve the policing question in the north would require not just political change, but social change as well—this reality was a central focus of the community forums. Developing the community’s capacity to deal with its own issues through restorative justice work was about far more than replacing an increasingly unpopular method of social control.

“We need to develop communities—particularly working class communities—to the level where they have the capacity to try and change the context in which we’re actually living,” says Maguire. “That’s where you’ll start to see a turn-around in terms of advancing an approach to these [socio-economic] issues” (“An Introduction”).

‘The Blue Book’: Determining a model of community-based justice

We regard the proposed system as a contribution to a broad agenda concerning offender accountability, the empowerment of victims, community development, community responsibility and participation in the justice process. If anti-social crime is to be tackled effectively in a lawful and peaceable fashion, then it will require a far reaching and imaginative debate involving all of those communities most directly affected by such crime. We hope that this document can make a

contribution to those discussions. Such debates are surely the essence of the “process” which leads to peace (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie).

So reflected Jim Auld, Brian Gormally, Kieran McEvoy, and Michael Ritchie on their proposals for a community-based justice system in the conclusion to their report, “Designing a System of Restorative Community Justice in Northern Ireland.” Widely referred to as ‘the Blue Book,’ the report outlines the process through which members of the nationalist community devised an alternative to the use of punishment violence, and would subsequently become the framework for the creation of Community Restorative Justice Ireland. It is worth reviewing both because it provided the roadmap for a community-based justice system in the north of Ireland and because it documents the open and inclusive discussion—what the authors refer as the “essence of the process which leads to peace”—that led to the foundation of a sustainable and truly grassroots alternative.

As mentioned previously, a number of republican activists had approached academics, criminologists and community workers with a mind towards devising an alternative to punishment violence in the community. The discussions and training packages which resulted from this collaboration helped to shape in the minds of participants a more solid critique of formal vs. informal justice systems, and allowed them to generate a tangible way of moving forward towards an alternative system. The process of consultation and discussion, particularly with those that live and work in areas most impacted by crime and anti-social behavior, also greatly increased the value of the ‘Blue Book,’ assert the authors (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie). The text of the book mirrors the process through which it was created, with chapters that provide background on human rights and informal justice, the history of justice systems in Ireland, the definition and causes of crime, and international comparisons of informal and alternative justice systems.

The ‘Blue Book’ begins with an overview of restorative justice and a discussion of the potential of its use in the north of Ireland. According to the authors, restorative justice is “an approach to dealing with the harms created by crime which views such problems as a breakdown in relationships and seeks to repair those relationships” (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie). Crime is defined as an injury to personal relationships

or property, and the restorative justice approach aims to replace the concept of retribution or retaliation with a process geared towards healing the harm which involves all parties affected by it. Rather than viewing crime as action that violates rules or the rule of law, restorative justice regards crime as a form of interpersonal conflict that causes real harm to real people (qtd. in Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie). There are three key players that must be involved in any form of restorative justice practice—the victim(s), offender(s) and the community or communities in which each lives.

Restorative justice aims to understand and protect the active needs of victims that result from the harm caused by a crime. Psychological issues experienced by the victim of a crime can be just as damaging as any physical or material harm suffered; these include feelings of helplessness, lack of control, and an inability to comprehend why the crime happened. A community-based system of justice would create a safe space where those needs are recognized and addressed. Some victims may seek a validation of their pain, while others may want the perpetrator to understand how their actions affected them, their families, and the wider community. Restorative justice practitioners can provide support, advocacy and intervention to victims, as well as organize activities such as voluntary victim/offender mediation in an attempt to repair harm (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie).

Rather than focus on punishment for the offender, restorative justice attempts to find a solution that will hold the individual accountable for their actions, will allow him or her to acknowledge responsibility for the crime and seek to repair any damage, and offers a way to return to and assume a meaningful role in the community in the future. The authors point out that both imprisonment (punishment by the traditional criminal justice system) and punishment violence in any form can cause the offender to self-harm or continue to commit crimes, rather than take responsibility for their actions. Studies have shown that these types of punishment create a cycle of estrangement and isolation that often results in recidivism; according to the 'Blue Book' authors, such cycles are prevalent in many communities in the north of Ireland (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie).

Restorative justice also offers another important alternative—rather than trying to separate offenders from a community, the practice allows for localities to exercise a sense

of ownership, control and responsibility for the entire justice process. Practitioners are able to work out a solution that safeguards the rights of all those involved and prevent the exclusion of individuals. The authors of the 'Blue Book' suggest that participation in restorative justice practices can be quite beneficial and empowering for the whole community; as the community works to produce a non-violent solution, it will also develop a better sense of itself. One theory argues that participation may serve to educate people who are used to understanding the issue of crime from a retributive angle. "Involvement in a restorative justice programme may offer an alternative view as well as highlighting the positive aspects of communities prepared to engage in innovative and progressive attempts to take responsibility for dealing with crime in their areas," argues Auld et al (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie).

The community-led consultation process produced a set of characteristics necessary for an alternative justice model to be successful. Participants agreed that a viable system must have community involvement and support, be non-violent, allow for due process, ensure that sanctions are proportional to crimes, be consistent, engage with the community throughout the process, liaise with community organizations and have adequate access to their relevant resources, and have sufficient resources for trainings and program costs (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie). The 'Blue Book' also offers suggestions for a structure that would fulfill the specifications listed above and the process through which the structure would operate (see charts in Appendix F).

In laying out the proposed design for a model of community justice, the authors stress that such an undertaking should not be taken lightly. The magnitude should not under-estimated, and as such, its development must necessarily be part of a larger vision of community development. Auld et al write:

It makes no sense to divorce it from the existing efforts designed to create integrated and inclusive communities which take responsibility for tackling a wide range of the problems which face them. The implication is that a community justice system be seen as a particular element of the general drive towards community development and that it be bolted on to the coordinated structures which are emerging in many areas (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie).

Exactly how this would work would differ from place to place, but for a system to be effective on its own and as part of a larger community effort to improve quality of life it

is necessary to take a step back and consider the concept of “community.” Community restorative justice projects must be rooted in an identifiable neighborhood with a manageable population size; a larger effort aimed at nationalist Belfast would require an umbrella group to oversee local projects. In addition, as the authors point out, their idea of a “community” is not homogeneous relative to class, political affiliation or opinions on justice issues or politics. Therefore, any management structure put in place to oversee the justice project would have to be truly representative and would ideally be inclusive of statutory, voluntary or religious organizations that are themselves more broadly organized and not defined by neighborhood or geographic location (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie).

The ‘Blue Book’ includes the text of a draft Community Charter (see Appendix G) that was created to publicly acknowledge the rights of individuals living in the community and to recognize and accept the legitimacy of the proposed community justice model. The Charter represents a commitment by residents to the ideals subscribed to therein, as well as to the justice process created to support, protect and encourage those community-held ideals. It outlines a number of rights and freedoms, such as a right to shelter, political participation, employment, and sexual orientation, and states that each individual in the community has the responsibility to ensure that they do not create or enhance or in any way contribute to a situation that may prevent their neighbors from exercising those rights. The signatories to the Charter agree to uphold and respect the rights of their neighbors; reject violence as a means of solving problems; and cooperate in any agreed upon form of alternative justice model in the community. The preamble of the Charter reads as though it could be the prelude to a community’s principles of environmental justice, and demonstrates how the establishment of a restorative justice model is part of a wider community visioning process:

Accepting that recognition and acceptance of the collective, and individual, rights and associated responsibilities of all the members of our community is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace for all of us and acknowledging the need to consistently promote and advance a supportive social and physical environment as essential to the development of the potential of all in our neighborhood we, the residents of “_____” commit ourselves to the promotion of a new spirit and infrastructure designed to build a better community.

In keeping with this commitment we agree to work collectively, jointly and separately as appropriate to ensure and reaffirm the dignity and worth of all who live here regardless of gender, race, religion, language, disability, sexuality or age and to strive to the best of our abilities to promote social justice, supportive relationships and an associated physical environment for all who live in our community (qtd. in Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie).

Delivering justice at the community level

There is a uniqueness about what is happening with Community Restorative Justice Ireland because of the political vacuum caused by the lack of formal policing, and because of the very strong history of community development and volunteering in the area, says training coordinator Harry Maguire. “We went from not knowing anything about restorative approaches to becoming a world leader,” he explained, “because of the context in which CRJ operates—the backdrop of the peace process, the transitional nature of our society, and the changes we are currently going through. There’s that sense that it is different here” (Maguire, Personal interview). Brian Gormally, restorative justice practitioner and co-author of the ‘Blue Book’ explains:

The parallel developments of community-based restorative justice have been extraordinary by international standards. Instead of the normal model of painstakingly created projects facing community apathy and official disdain, we have seen the ideas of restorative justice sweeping through communities. The ideas of restorative justice have formed the core of what has become a real social movement.

For clear historical reasons, the communities in Northern Ireland have become well-organised at a neighbourhood level with a high level of structure and activity. Into this culture of willingness to organise and take collective responsibility for problems has come a set of ideas and practices that actually allow success in an area very close to people’s hearts – safety and justice. This is neither just a protest movement nor a limited area of practice – it is a severely practical but also emotionally inspiring way of making a difference in matters of central concern to the community (Gormally).

After funding was secured in 1998, Community Restorative Justice Ireland was formed in Andersonstown, West Belfast. CRJI is now the umbrella organization overseeing a number of autonomous restorative justice member groups, all of which subscribe to CRJ’s Best Practice and Working Guidelines. As of April 4, 2001, there

were fourteen projects, both funded and voluntary, operating throughout the north of Ireland. The projects were formed using the model laid out in the 'Blue Book,' and their activities revolve around mediation, family conferencing, and monitoring of agreements (McEvoy and Mika 537-8).

According to their promotional materials, CRJ "brings people together to solve problems that harm the community." Projects are locally-based and are run by trained volunteers who also come from the local community. Generally, the restorative justice process works like this: first, a referral is made either by an organization or by a victim (and in some cases, by the offender). If possible, mediation sessions are held with the parties involved; if mediation is not possible, CRJ will attempt to negotiate a settlement but will not arbitrate. CRJ workers will also provide any relevant support services to the victim and offender, and will liaise with other community or legal organizations in an effort to resolve the situation. A mutually agreed upon resolution is an ideal outcome of the process; this can also be reinforced by a written contract that documents that resolution. In many cases, the process of mediation and negotiation itself reduces the tension in the community and sometimes solves the problem. Each case is then recorded and put on file (Community Restorative Justice Ireland).

Teresa Clarke, manager and head coordinator of the Andersonstown office, explains that the bulk of the issues that CRJ works on are what would be considered neighborhood disputes—many of which may start with kids fighting in the street, but could quickly end up in court. She describes a common scenario in which CRJ intervenes in a local dispute, "We would say to people, if you come in and talk reasonably and see how we could help you, how we can facilitate you getting around the table, we can all look at what the issues are and figure out how you can deal with them before it gets out of hand and might lead to something bigger" (Clarke).

Clarke described a specific case in which a local community watch group approached CRJ about some incidents that were taking place with local youth in the area that had people afraid to go to their doors; some people were even being physically abused or threatened. CRJ responded by first sending out a standard letter explaining the group and their services, and then organized a round-table discussion with the community watch group, neighborhood residents, and their children. Though the group of kids

causing the trouble weren't even the worst of kids—they were mostly gathering in groups insulting people and drinking on the street—there was one child at the meeting who was being bullied to the extent that he was thinking of taking his own life, Clarke remembered. Another young child was continually abused as he tried to deliver newspapers that the group would take from him regularly. In another serious incident, the group of youths would light fires, call the fire brigade, and subsequently attack them when they came to put out the fire (Clarke).

Soon after the letter was sent out, representatives of the community watch group, the parents of the children involved, and some of the young people in question attended a scheduled mediation session at the Andersonstown office. First the organizers explained the ground rules: the participants were to respect one another, only one person was allowed to speak at a time, all must be honest or the process does not work, and the process is confidential. The community members were then asked to do the talking to find out what the main issues were. Clarke explains what happened when CRJ was able to bring a number of those involved to the table:

Throughout the whole process, people were able to sit in a calmer situation than would be out in the streets there—they were able to talk, communicate, and understand each other. And they were able to get their points across from all sides. Parents weren't happy about some members of the community out there doing community watch, and they seen them as boogeymen—you know, you're attacking our kids. And they [the community watch groups] were able to say, well why don't you come out, or give me a number so when your child is out I can phone you and you can come round and take your child home when they're out there at twelve o'clock at night and they're underage or whatever.

So it's getting the parents and the people on that side of the table to take on board what their children are doing. And from that there's actually a community safety network in the area that's trying to set up and bring people on board, including local councilors, and outreach workers who are in short supply as well. It's about trying to bring people together to help these kids, and it's to let people know that we're here to help them in support; we're not here to fight with you, we're here to have a facilitative meeting.

And it turned out quite successful at the end, people understood where each were coming from. And I think from it they'll actually get some of these parents on board. And the ones that didn't come in—two of the youth that did come in, they're about 15, they said they'd been around to apologize. And the other ones who hadn't, apologized to the parents of the child who had been bullied. And they were able to get a feeling of what it was like, how serious it was for the

young lad who was being bullied—what the effects of their behavior was having on that child (Clarke).

Clarke hopes that the outcome of that mediation will serve to build a bridge to get the people in that neighborhood involved in a broader community safety network. With any luck, the people in the area will begin to take responsibility for their actions and their kids' actions—and will learn that responsibility is about more than telling their children they can be out late at night as long as they are safe. Parents should know what their children are doing at those hours, especially if there is a chance they are picking on other kids, or being disruptive, Clarke points out. By bringing the different parties to a neutral place and encouraging and facilitating their dialogue, CRJ was able to nurture a basic level of understanding amongst the groups that eased tensions and has the potential to develop into a stronger community safety network in that area (Clarke).

CRJ often deals with more serious disputes. Clarke recalled a case that happened a few years back and involved a group of young people who had broken into seventeen homes in the area. The group had caused quite a bit of damage, stolen jewelry and a lot of money, and had left the neighborhood quite upset. A lot of the kids, Clarke explained, were just caught up in a cycle and didn't realize the damage they were doing. It took CRJ months to complete its outreach and do the intervention necessary to bring everyone around the table. Volunteers started by contacting the parents, and then the victims, and finally the young people were contacted individually until they were all brought to the table in the CRJ office. There, the victims were able to see the kids that had broken into their homes, and knew that they weren't going to attack them again.

“It could have been a lot worse,” Clarke says. “The kids could have gone to jail—sent to Hydebank, which would be the jail for young offenders. So it saved all that from happening, and that can have a bad effect on kids going into these places as well. And we would monitor the situation after we're done, for all groups, for all cases that we work on” (Clarke).

Research has shown that petty disputes or trivial arguments are at the roots of most violent crimes committed by people on those with whom they have had prior relationships (Shonholtz 49). It is for precisely this reason that Shonholtz argues that law enforcement is ill-equipped to deal with the underlying causes of crime and anti-social

behavior. Instead, the power lies in the hands of the community to address these root issues before they are allowed to escalate into criminal violence. Early intervention is crucial, he argues, and community-based justice systems provide the means through which levels of crime can be dramatically reduced (Shonholtz 49).

The majority of cases that CRJ works on are neighborhood disputes; though they do mediate some more difficult issues, there are certain issues like rape, murder, or child sexual abuse that they are simply not equipped for. Often, CRJ volunteers are asked to liaise with the armed groups in the community. In the past, people who had committed crimes—particularly repeat offenders—were asked to leave the area due to their behavior. Though CRJ cannot deal with everything, they do often negotiate with these sorts of offenders if they agree to change their offending behavior. They would be asked to sign a contract, and then CRJ would determine the resources available in the community to help deal with the particular issue at hand—whether there is counseling available and so forth—and would then help facilitate that process.

“Mediation would be just one of our techniques—our biggest technique,” Harry Maguire offers. “It’s about understanding that if there is criminality or anti-social behavior, or there’s been a dispute among neighbors or members of the community—that affects the relationships. And when relationships start to break down, we can bring them in to help rebuild them” (“An Introduction”).

Maguire explains that the term “restorative” as applied through the work of CRJ means more than simply resolving a particular dispute. It is also about determining the root causes of the issue, and changing the context or environment which may contribute to an individual or group’s decision to participate in anti-social behavior in the first place. He discusses how this impacts the people they work with:

Because you know, one of the things that we try to develop, is that if you have a young person who is 14 years of age, and they’re out in this community at two, three, four o’clock in the morning in a stolen vehicle—you need to ask yourselves different sets of questions. Why is the young person doing this? Why have they taken this route? What’s happening in the home? Why is there no supervision? And generally when we ask those questions, we come up with answers like the mother and father aren’t really doing too well and may have issues. So unless you start dealing with and cracking issues, and try and turn those issues around, the 14 year old is lost. Because the 14 year old doesn’t have the skill, doesn’t have the

experience, doesn't have the understanding of consequences that an adult will. And unless you try to change that context... ("An Introduction").

In his work on environmental justice movements in the United States, Daniel Faber underscored the idea that "the struggle for environmental justice is not just about distributing risks equally but about preventing them from being produced in the first place" (qtd. in Agyeman and Evans 60). Similarly, the work of restorative justice is about more than settling disputes between and amongst neighbors. The work of CRJ provides the opportunity for community members to mobilize around a particular issue and to contribute to making a tangible difference in the area's overall quality of life. Like the EJ movement, CRJ recognizes that embedded structural inequalities form the roots of many of the community's problems. Restorative justice is as much about nurturing communities and encouraging them to become more open, inclusive, accountable and just, as it is about making an impact on anti-social behavior. Incorporating the day-to-day work of CRJ within a broader equality agenda ensures the process of community capacity building.

Participation in community transformation through mediation

Empowerment of individuals

Proponents of community mediation schemes, according to Professor George Pavlich, argue that such projects empower disputants to free themselves from the state and allow individuals the opportunity to reclaim control of their communities through their active participation in conflict resolution. Those who participate do so voluntarily, and therefore are more inclined to abide by any agreements established as a result of the mediation process, and become better educated about how to avoid or resolve disputes that may arise in the future—without involving the criminal justice system. Proponents also argue that the process of participation serves to rebuild and strengthen whole communities (Pavlich 710). If individual autonomy and the strength of a community are integral to the functioning of a liberal democracy, Pavlich asserts, then "community mediation is implicated in a quest to revitalize communities by nurturing individual freedom" (711).

Pavlich's own research, however, goes beyond discussing the common arguments for and against alternative dispute resolution; he posits that the techniques used in mediation encourage individuals to adopt "non-disputing self-identities," or states of mind focused on gaining understanding rather than argument in any given situation. Pavlich is most interested in the techniques of power that community mediation employs, and in particular, the "techniques of self" that are used to create these non-disputing self-identities—in other words, "how selves are fashioned through the mediation process" (711).

Pavlich explains his theory through a case study of a mediation session in which an auto repairman and the owner of a large limousine are in disagreement about a number of issues, including repairs made to the vehicle and loss of substantial income to the owner. He likens the actual mediation process, in which facilitators negotiate between the two parties with the aim of resolving their dispute, to a confession of sorts. The disputants are invited to "confess" and the mediators then shape their stories in an attempt to form "non-disputing selves." According to Pavlich, the mediation process becomes a sort of ritual in which participants reveal the truth behind their involvement in the dispute in question. He writes:

Selves disclose truths about themselves in a confidential forum where others help to renegotiate interpretations of self-identity. Visions of self are dialogically shaped by others within a domain that encourages—or seeks to neutralize—particular exegeses of self, discourses of dispute, and conceptions of settlement (722).

In other words, mediators use their skills to guide dialogue and discussion, thereby encouraging participants to view themselves and the dispute in a particular way.

The role of the mediators is equally important in this "process of secular atonement" as Pavlich calls it, as they are trained facilitators engaged in leading the discussion in a particular fashion and direction. They guide the course of the discussion, delve for further information and know when it is appropriate to praise and criticize—all with a mind towards resolving the dispute. Mediators are helpers and not judges, Pavlich explains, and therefore strive to be supportive, kind and encouraging to create a climate suitable for agreement. The process also aims to provide a resolution free from blame (722).

In an effort to discover how involvement in restorative justice practices affects individuals, I spoke to several Community Restorative Justice employees and volunteers about what initially motivated them to become involved and how they feel their own lives have been influenced by their participation. Their stories reveal a more personal side of the work of CRJ, and provide a more detailed account of how the community-based justice system impacts residents' everyday lives.

Bill Groves, Safer Neighborhood Project

Bill Groves works with the Greater Andersonstown Safer Neighborhoods Project and is a community liaison worker with the Upper Andersonstown Community Forum, an umbrella group for all the community projects operating in the Andersonstown area. Groves works with CRJ through his position with Safer Neighborhoods, an initiative that focuses on youth outreach and building residents' groups. The two groups coordinate to tackle anti-social crime on a regular basis. Groves grew up in West Belfast and experienced first-hand what the community went through with the police. "Our community went through far too much over these last thirty years," Groves said. "We need to constantly build, and keep what community spirit is here" (Groves).

It may have been that community spirit and the shared experience of coming through a conflict that motivated Groves to become involved in working to create a safer, stronger community. Groves explains that his upbringing gave him a sense of himself and a sense of his community, or people, that grew into a desire to give something back. He talks about his childhood, about walking the streets as a young boy, aged seven or eight, being harassed, degraded and searched by armed soldiers on a regular basis, being dragged out of bed in the middle of the night. In his experience, people were more used to a policeman trying to beat them than solve a problem for anyone. So when he grew up, Groves started to do community work. "I think a lot of that has played on my mind, that our people in this community needed—they needed help," he explained. "And you know, they still need the help to keep them up" (Groves).

Family and the opportunity to be directly involved in making the change he would like to see in his community are also strong motivating factors for Groves. He explains:

I have a wee sense of myself in the sense that I just feel that there is something that I can offer. Now, a lot of what I do, I've been doing it for years, without—it's only recently that I've taken a job that pays a wage. Recently as in 6 weeks ago. Prior to this all I would've done this anyway. The motivation is probably to make it a better place. I have kids now of my own, that I want more for my children than what I had. Maybe not so much that I want them to...I don't want them to be better than anyone else, but I would certainly like them to have the opportunity to better themselves.

Now. How do we do that? If we sit back and allow the state—in my eyes, if we sit back and allow the state to run our community, it's not going to get any better. We're going to end up like the ghettos of the past. It wouldn't have any great impact on our lives and on the quality of our lives. We need to keep plowing on (Groves).

According to Groves, individual involvement in the betterment of communities is necessary to realize change. He strives to motivate others through the work he does each day. It's all about how people feel about themselves and their community, Groves says (Groves).

Groves also spoke about how he has witnessed the empowerment of individuals and the new skills he has seen community members acquire through their participation in Safer Neighborhoods and CRJ projects. He describes a woman he has known his entire life, who lived next door to where he grew up, and was always very quiet. Groves had seen her at many meetings in the neighborhood and had never seen her ask a question or so much as open her mouth. Recently, the woman joined a residents' group, and Groves asked her to take on the simple task of contacting members to let them know about the next meeting. Soon after, she took on the role of secretary of the group and within weeks was applying for jobs—something she had not done in twenty years. “I was on holiday for a couple of weeks and I got back and I passed her house, and her house is the brightest house on the street,” Groves said. “She's had it repainted from top to bottom outside, she's window baskets on her...that woman's life is just so turned around.” He mentioned the changes he had seen in her, and she replied enthusiastically, “Isn't it brilliant?” (Groves).

Participation in mediation and tackling anti-social behavior empowers people, and gives them a sense of ownership over their communities. Groves provides some insight as to what he has seen happen in his community:

It was probably a sense of fear creeping into our community, as regards trying to deal with the anti-social end of stuff. You know, people may have seen somebody coming into their street and spraying their names all over the wall, and people would've done their blinds—"that's terrible"—but they wouldn't have done nothing about it.

Because we have given people an opportunity to do something for themselves, they are now saying to them, "I stood for 2 hours and painted that wall. There's no way is anybody going to write on it." Because they are coming out and saying, "Hey boy, where you at? Aye, I know you, aye."

Now, through all of that, the people that are involved in all these criminal acts, their heads are down, they're taking a back seat, for lack of a better term. They've moved away, they're not as visible, the criminality isn't as high. And that's all down to residents being empowered, just for saying to people, listen, this is your street. . Get out and do something about it. You know, if it happens on my front door, I'm going to have to do something about it, but if it happens on your front door, you need to get out and do something about it as well (Groves).

You can actually see the change in people, Groves says.

John Allsopp, CRJ volunteer

John Allsopp's experience as an alcoholic and as a troubled youth was what motivated him to become involved in community work. He has been a CRJ volunteer since 2004. Allsopp quit drinking at the age of nineteen, and had been sober for eight years at the time of my interview. The drinking culture in West Belfast is a huge problem, he says, and he wants to help the young people in the area to deal with it (Allsopp).

Although sitting down to talk about your problems is a very simple idea, Allsopp says, it is really hard to do. It helps people to deal with their problems, but unfortunately for a lot of people in the community, it just isn't done. People in the area are prone to take out their problems physically on one another by fighting, or on themselves through drinking or doing drugs. Unless you tap into the underlying problems—like peer pressure, parents abusing alcohol in the home, or bullying—the problems will continue to come up. This is where mediation can be an invaluable resource, Allsopp says.

His experience with CRJ has been overwhelmingly positive, in large part because he has brought the CRJ process into his everyday life. It is enough to just go through the training program—even if you do not practice within the walls of CRJ, Allsopp explains,

for you bring what you have learned into your everyday life. According to Allsopp, the CRJ process enables people to approach conflict in a completely different way than people in that society are used to. Allsopp's involvement in CRJ has changed him tremendously too—by giving him a voice. He explains:

Well, see when I first came in here, I had very low self-confidence. It's only been over I'd say the past year, where I...See all this here, sitting around the table—I wouldn't have been able to do that. I would have, but I'd have been all shaking. Now it's just given me the confidence to actually...

Before, I didn't have a voice, or an opinion. Now I'm actually able to voice my opinion and hold an argument and hold me own. I have the confidence to actually talk about me. So for me that's where CRJ has gotten me personally (Allsopp).

Harry Maguire, CRJ Training Officer and Hugh Doyle, CRJ Volunteer

“I think that ex-prisoners certainly tend to be very active politically, care about the advancement of community initiatives, and in those terms have a very important role to play [in CRJ],” says Hugh Doyle, a former republican prisoner and volunteer at CRJ (Doyle). Doyle was responding to some of the criticism that has been leveled in the past against the participation of ex-prisoners in restorative justice schemes. Many republican ex-prisoners have gained very valuable knowledge and experience from their involvement in the conflict, Doyle says. Doyle joined CRJ as a way to give back to the community, and felt that his participation in the organization would be the most direct way to make an impact on the level of crime and anti-social behavior that he believes is “bleeding the community in which he lives” (Doyle).

CRJ Training Officer Harry Maguire is also a republican ex-prisoner. Like Doyle, he was motivated to get involved in restorative justice to help fill the void created by the lack of an accountable policing service in his community. Because of his background as a republican activist, Maguire says, he was attracted to the idea of restorative justice. The community's experience with the police and the subsequent use of punishment violence to deal with problems had been a burning issue for quite some time, and Maguire felt he could contribute to a lasting solution. “I looked at this project as being about peace-building on the ground,” he said. Maguire was attracted to the idea of changing communities' mindsets and empowering them to resolve issues without the

use of violence. “I’d also seen the project as an impact on the quality of life in local communities,” Maguire explained. “I would have always viewed my activities as a republican activist as about that very thing, so it was very easy for me to make that transition” (Personal interview).

According to Maguire, any criticism leveled at CRJ regarding the participation of ex-prisoners is disingenuous to say the least. Where do the politicians who make those remarks think that CRJ derives its legitimacy from, he wonders—particularly when there are members of the security forces who have been involved in collusion and in murdering members of both the nationalist and unionist communities and have never served a day in prison? Republican ex-prisoners are held to a high standard within the republican community as well as the broader nationalist community. He explains:

There’s an understanding of where we come from and what we’ve gone through. And then for people like me, about what we’re trying to achieve, what we’re trying to do. We aren’t—when people throw this prisoner thing out—it’s not like you are viewed as a criminal. You know, people would understand that it’s about a political conflict.

And you’ll find this throughout the world, it’s people who have talked the talk and walked the walk that many people will turn to for advice and support, for actually getting things done. Truly we are a society in transition, and clearly we need people to bring that on to the ground. In my view, ex-prisoners are very well-placed to achieve that (Personal interview).

If we are truly to be a society of equals, we must bring everyone with us as we make the transition to a more just society, Maguire asserts. In many areas there are upwards of fifteen to twenty thousand ex-prisoners. What would it say about the kind of society we are trying to create if there is room for some but not others? Maguire asks (Personal interview).

McEvoy and Mika’s research reinforces Maguire’s observations about the status of ex-prisoners within the republican/nationalist community. They are respected for their sacrifice to the community, they write. Active involvement in restorative justice schemes can be particularly beneficial to former prisoners and paramilitaries who are reintegrating into society: “...it is our view that community-based restorative justice programs are an excellent vehicle to ensure that former combatants resume a ‘normal,’ non-elevated status

as part of local community life, part of a broad-based, organic and contested civil society,” write McEvoy and Mika (547).

On a personal level, working with CRJ has increased Maguire’s life skills. “It’s given me a different lens through which to view conflict,” he says. The process of community mediation has exposed him to a new, more productive way of thinking about the world, and he has seen the same effect across the board with people who work with the project. Doyle agrees, saying that it has honed his listening and interpersonal skills:

I think that, in terms of personal esteem-building, it’s helped me to develop communication and inter-personal skills which I may not have necessarily had before. It can be very challenging to sit down face to face with a person and listen, in some cases, to very sensitive information. Sometimes it can be a bit daunting. It can be emotionally challenging. So I think in terms of personal capacity-building, it’s helped me to develop a better understanding of people who may not necessarily be in the same stable, kind of situation that I’m in—that I’m personally in.

And through that there, it’s helped me to empathize with people on a different level than it did previously. And it’s also helped me to develop an understanding, of maybe the wider impact of conflict and anti-social behavior in a wider context within the community (Doyle).

Contributions to quality of life

Shonholtz believes prevention and conflict resolution to be the “work territory” of communities. He argues that citizens are the only ones that have the status necessary to engage with other members of their community and have the capacity to run the local justice systems that are better placed to deal with early intervention and prevention.

Francis Stone puts this idea into perspective from the standpoint of a CRJ volunteer:

I think the majority of the work we do, the cops wouldn’t get involved in anyway. Neighbor disputes or community disputes, things like that there. So CRJ nips it in the bud, stops it. For that there, I don’t think you need the police anyway. You know what I mean? That’s up for the community to solve the problems themselves, it’s up to the neighbors to solve the problems themselves, rather than having to go through the court service where you have a judge making an arbitrary decision. Whereas what you’ve here is you’re bringing both of the groups together, and for them it’s together to make that decision, and see the way forward for themselves. You know, and that’s the way I think justice should be (Francis Stone).

Shonholtz also points out that the need for formal law enforcement is decreased with the successful application of local justice schemes, and the more citizens participate in them, the greater the level of social cohesion and community harmony in that area. This is particularly the case when the measures to improve quality of life in the area are voluntarily undertaken by local residents. Shonholtz expands on the contributions of community-based justice initiatives:

Formal law is pushed further away as citizens begin to perform their unique dispute-settlement role, and in the performance of this work the authority and responsibility associated with these civic functions become readily visible and valued. Building a primary justice system at the community level affects not only the conflicts that people have, but the community life of the neighborhood and the capacity of citizens to work together in common purpose (52).

In addition, Shonholtz asserts, local participation in community-based justice schemes directly improves the role, function and skills of citizens (52).

Research has shown that the prevalence of crime in an area is affected by the degree to which people are invested in their neighborhoods and the level of their social integration into the community (qtd. in Brewer, Lockhart and Rodgers 573)—an idea that strengthens the theory that a place with the level of social capital found in West Belfast would be suitably placed to deal with anti-social behavior. McEvoy and Mika believe that the experience of anti-social behavior in a community significantly impacts one's view of the local quality of life (538). According to CRJ's 'Blue Book,' "The point of a community justice system is to use the knowledge, ability and interest of the community to answer the community's own demand for a safe and peaceful life" (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie 29). Such a statement reinforces Agyeman's argument that community involvement in addressing local problems and identifying appropriate solutions leads to a higher quality of life (Agyeman 15).

Citizens' empowerment and their active, democratic participation in their local communities certainly have a tremendous impact on the quality of life in the area. We have already seen, for example, how the participation of former combatants in community-based justice schemes aids in the process of their reintegration into society and adds a particular depth and perspective that can only enrich the kind of open and inclusive society that these schemes help to create. Roseland argues that "...for people to

prosper anywhere they must participate as competent citizens in the decisions and processes that affect their lives. Sustainable development is thus about the quantity and quality of empowerment and the participation of people” (qtd. in Warburton 67). In the previous section, CRJ organizers and volunteers described what prompted them to become involved in restorative justice, shared stories of how that involvement has changed them for the better, and discussed the changes that they have witnessed in others. CRJ participants also discussed the contributions to quality of life that they have noticed over the years.

The most exceptional change, without a doubt, is the shift from a reliance on paramilitary punishment beatings to a process of dialogue and mutual understanding. The purpose of restorative justice is to create a process that allows disputants to resolve their problems in a non-violent way, and in a way that puts the emphasis on relationships rather than solely what has happened, explains Harry Maguire (Personal interview). It’s also about the relationship between people and their community. “If you can maintain and strengthen and build on those relationships, one, the issue is much easier dealt with, but more importantly, secondly, the chances of that coming back into conflict are minimized,” Maguire says (Personal interview).

Volunteer John Fox says that the effect on local communities cannot be underestimated, particularly because it provides people with the opportunity to resolve their problems in a non-violent, neutral environment where all participants are supported. That can only be a positive thing for any community, he says (Fox). Teresa Clarke describes a recent mediation in which there was a lot of anger and a lot of tears on both sides—one person had even tried to leave and had to be talked into continuing with the process. After over four hours the group left shaking hands. “So what that did for that community—those people are able to live together,” Clarke said. “That has brought them as a community together” (Clarke, Personal interview).

Hugh Doyle thinks that the wider outreach that CRJ does, in terms of collaborating with other community organizations, is also vitally important to improving the quality of life in West Belfast. CRJ’s work feeds into other branches of the community’s infrastructure, Doyle explains, and has made a huge impact on communication within the community. In a way, Doyle points out, the role of CRJ is to

serve as a link between other community groups, to promote what they do and to encourage local people to use their resources (Doyle).

Maguire also believes that CRJ has important contributions to make to the political stability of the area, something that is particularly important to a community emerging from a violent conflict:

Well, political stability, I think, in any society, is a much-sought-after goal. When you have political instability, you tend to have conflict and a very down-trodden society, so I think to create a situation in which there is political stability, and many people in the north have never experienced that, means that, you know, you can deal with the political issues in a process of dialogue and you can start building from the ground up and focus on issues which largely have been ignored or have been mishandled. When we're not going through a process of conflict, we can start working on the social issues. It brings those issues to the fore. It lets you see what happens out there.

And it also allows you to start and plan, and say, well, I'll be working out here for the next five to ten years—I can make an impact on those issues (Personal interview).

Independent evaluation of CRJ

In December 2006, Professor Harry Mika published an independent evaluation study on the work of both CRJ and its loyalist community counterpart, Northern Ireland Alternatives. The study was commissioned by Atlantic Philanthropies, a major funder of both initiatives, and focuses on the period covered by the funder's investment (1999-2005) with a particular emphasis on "Phase II," from 2003-2005. The evaluation supports the idea that the restorative justice schemes produce positive outcomes for local communities and decrease the levels of paramilitary punishment violence.

Mika's study includes both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of both projects. His quantitative analysis showed that in Phase II, the work of CRJ prevented approximately eighty-two percent of possible paramilitary punishments from occurring in the local community. In addition, in all but one of the eight sites that have received funding from Atlantic Philanthropies, the use of beatings and shootings was zero by 2005. Mika's findings also support the conclusion that the use of restorative justice projects by armed groups also increased. In 2003 CRJ's cases accounted for seventy-eight percent of potential punishments; by 2005 that number had increased to ninety-four

percent. The study also found that contracts and agreements created as an outcome of the processes were completed in eighty-four to ninety-one percent of all cases handled by the two organizations across Phase II. Finally, CRJ and NIA's biannual case-monitoring showed that nearly three-quarters of clients did not encounter any additional problems (Mika i-iii).

Mika conducted several hundred interviews for the qualitative aspect of the independent evaluation, speaking to community leaders, statutory workers, victims, perpetrators, and representatives of political parties to name just a few. He discovered that many believed the restorative justice projects had quickly become essential community assets; both victims and offenders across the board remarked upon how they had been treated with fairness and respect; other community organizations that worked with CRJ and NIA highly valued the partnerships and believed the projects to be very responsive to community needs; and statutory workers often praised the levels of skill and organization for both projects. Mika also found the two projects to be overwhelmed with cases, and stressed the need for more funding and resources to support the hiring of more paid and professional staff. Many of the statutory workers that Mika interviewed expressed the fact that they were not able to fully engage with the projects until certain issues, such as policing, were formally resolved (26). It is worth noting that at the time the report was published, the nationalist community had not yet signed onto policing; therefore, the experiences of statutory workers who continue to engage with CRJ on some level are likely to have improved since the time of Mika's interviews.

Mika's main conclusion was that these projects work. Both restorative justice schemes were found to have a "measurable and significant" impact on the communities they serve. The restorative justice projects were found to be "important catalysts" for the development of the local area's capacity for peace-building and organizing efforts (Mika X). Mika's assessment reflects the information gleaned from my own interviews of CRJ workers—particularly the idea that the restorative justice schemes form part of a larger project geared toward developing local areas, or "building community." The organizations participate and collaborate with other groups in local campaigns and festivals, as well as other initiatives designed to address local problems like underage drinking and ethnic discrimination (Mika 28). Other indirect, positive impacts of the

restorative justice projects include an increase in levels of tolerance for marginalized members of the community and the successful reintegration of previously excluded members of the community (Mika 35).

According to Mika, the record of both projects is impressive in terms of both caseload and scope when compared to other restorative justice projects. The schemes grew organically out of the distinctive context of community initiatives in their respective areas, and as such, make a unique contribution to the practice of restorative justice around the world. Mika writes:

The community-based restorative justice initiatives are attempting, under often difficult circumstances, to make headway against the tide of such challenges, by building local institutions, encouraging the local exercise of human rights, providing community safety, confronting the legacies of violence, and encouraging civic participation. They contribute as well to the peace process and to community peace-building, by engaging ex-combatants in peaceful community activism, creating non-violent options for responding to conflict in a local area, and by reducing crime and anti-social behavior. They stand poised to serve as a conduit, a broker and a bridge between members of their local communities and the State (37).

CRJ can provide a context for and, indeed, become a catalyst for larger scale, grassroots community change and pave the way for a truly sustainable society.

The role of women and youth in CRJ

Just as is the experience in the Environmental Justice movement, women play a very prominent and leading role in Community Restorative Justice. The fact that the majority of interviews conducted for this thesis were with men is merely coincidental and in no way reflects a gender imbalance in the organizing or facilitation efforts of CRJ. In fact, the make-up of the organization is heavily female, and women tend to stay involved longer than men do. At a follow-up interview in August 2009 I met with a group of CRJ volunteers (three female and one male) who run the Twinbrook office in West Belfast, where we discussed the integral role that women play in the provision of restorative justice in the community.

Women form the backbone of the organization, one volunteer stated emphatically. “It’s a historical thing,” said Teresa Clarke. Throughout the course of the conflict, she explained, nationalist communities had to do their own thing—because of the lack of

policing and so many of the men in jail, the women in the community had to take over, Clarke said. “You have to understand the legacy of our community—upwards of fifty percent of the men in this community were in jail at one point. There were no resources available for anything anywhere, and the statutory agencies were untouchable then.”

Women ran so many community groups, such as Smash Internment and the anti-H-block campaign that without their central participation, the community would not have survived as it did (Clarke and CRJ Twinbrook volunteers).

In addition to their regular mediation activities, CRJ also recently hosted an event called “Empowering Women” in collaboration with the PSNI and Women’s Aid. The five-hour open house had information stalls, support and advice on women’s safety, health and well-being, and provided childcare services. Speakers at the event included the Deputy Chief Constable of the PSNI, Judith Gillespie, and two members of the Legislative Assembly—Jennifer McCann of Sinn Féin and Dawn Purvis of the Progressive Unionist Party; each shared inspirational stories of their personal journeys and paths to empowerment, and urged the women present to avail themselves of the resources being offered by the community groups present that day.

Although CRJ has run programs targeted at young people who are engaged in or may be susceptible to involvement in anti-social behavior, youth do not play a direct role in the organization—primarily because facilitators must be at least eighteen years of age to participate. The age requirement is mostly an issue of maturity, the sensitive nature of the issues that people bring to CRJ, and confidentiality. There would also be the issue of young people leaving the office carrying the burden of dealing with all of those sensitive issues. According to the Twinbrook volunteers, CRJ has never really been approached by anyone younger than eighteen looking to get involved (Clarke and CRJ Twinbrook volunteers).

Conclusion: ‘The process which leads to peace’

In April 2008, politicians, community members and activists worldwide celebrated the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), a major peace accord that many, including Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams, understand to represent a defining moment of change in the political history of Ireland. At no time in the past had the people of Ireland had so much hope and confidence in the future of the island, Adams reminisced in the republican newspaper *An Phoblacht*—for the Agreement was about real, substantive change, about leveling the playing field (Adams). “The goal of that peace process was to agree a political arrangement that could end decades of violence by addressing the root causes of conflict, and by allowing all of the participants to pursue their respective political objectives peacefully and democratically, and without fear of discrimination or repression,” Adams wrote (Adams, “The Good Friday Agreement”).

The last decade has demonstrated that the process of forging the Agreement, trying as it was, has proven to be much simpler than its implementation, just as Senator George Mitchell once predicted it would be (Adams). Unfortunately, in addition to the daily business of politics and making the institutions work, the powers-that-be have more recently been confronted by the threat of violence from a small section of society that does not support the GFA or the power-sharing government, preferring the use of violence to achieve the political goal of driving out the British. Never before has this threat been so salient as during the past few months, as dissident groups step up their campaign of fear and intimidation in an attempt to shake the foundations of the blossoming peace process.

“What I have to do, is that I have to keep my nerve, and I have to appeal to my community and to everybody within the community to assist the police services, North and South, to defeat these people,” said Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. “That is the best advice I think we can give at this time. So there is a duty on me, there is a responsibility on me, to lead from the front. I think I am leading from the front, and I expect that people will follow because these people, they are traitors to the island of Ireland. They have betrayed the political desires, hopes and aspirations of all of the people who live in this island. And they don’t deserve to be supported by anyone” (“Continuity IRA”).

The remarks made by McGuinness, himself a former leader of the IRA, were in response to the recent murders of two British soldiers and a police officer by dissident republicans. On March 7, 2009, members of the Real IRA (RIRA) shot and killed Sapper Patrick Azimkar (21) and Sapper Mark Quinsey (23) as they stepped out of Massereene Barracks in Antrim to receive a pizza delivery. Two days later, the Continuity IRA (CIRA) would murder PSNI Constable Stephen Paul Carroll (48) in Craigavon as he responded to a routine call about a broken window. The attacks were an attempt by dissident republican paramilitary groups to derail the peace process; groups such as the RIRA and CIRA oppose the Good Friday Agreement and wish to continue an armed campaign to drive the British out of Ireland. McGuinness lambasted the dissident groups at a joint press conference with First Minister Peter Robinson and PSNI Chief Constable Hugh Orde; a month later the Real IRA would respond with a death threat. “Traitors die” read their Easter message to McGuinness, in which they also threatened future attacks on the UK, high-profile targets, and young Catholic recruits to the PSNI (Gray).

The murders were immediately condemned across the board by nationalist and unionist politicians and community leaders. There would be no return to the old days, warned British Prime Minister Gordon Brown (“Continuity IRA”). PSNI Chief Superintendent Alan Todd wondered what possible source of support the perpetrators could have, especially in light of the fact that he believes the PSNI is actively engaging with local people to build safer communities (“Continuity IRA”). “Whoever was involved, they have no support and no strategy and no popular will to back up their actions,” stated Gerry Adams (McDonald and Bowcott).

The sight of McGuinness sharing a podium with Orde and Robinson to emphatically condemn the killings and urge the community to support the police in their efforts to confront dissident republican violence was certainly a demonstration of the political change that has occurred in Ireland over the past few years. Robinson and McGuinness had distinguished themselves through their unified stance on this issue, said one journalist, calling it a “high wire act of a heroic gesture” (O’Doherty). The significance to some of a former leader of the IRA condemning so-called fellow republicans should not be underestimated. The war is over, McGuinness asserted. “I will stand for all democrats against their attempts to plunge us back into conflict, to see

soldiers on the streets, to see more checkpoints, to see houses being raided and to see people being dragged back to interrogation centres. Those days are over. They can never come back again,” he said (O’Doherty).

Many, including PSNI Chief Constable Hugh Orde, believe that the full transfer of policing and justice powers to Belfast will allow the Northern Ireland community to truly stand up to the dissident republican violence. “We are ready for it and I think that when local people take responsibility for local policing, the endgame of Patten has been achieved and policing with the community will go from strength to strength,” Orde commented (Moriarty). Speaking on the topic of resolving conflict through dialogue at a recent event to honor the late David Ervine, Orde pointed to the consensus amongst the elected and unelected leadership that the community will not move backwards in the face of this new threat. The next big challenge to policing would be preventing young people from falling prey to the dissident groups, to stop the killers from “tricking more young people into the downward spiral of serious crime, oblivion and incarceration,” he said (Moriarty).

The recent violence also presents a new challenge to restorative justice groups like CRJ who have enjoyed tremendous successes over the past few years. According to a BBC News report, the PSNI has also recorded a rise in the number of incidents involving paramilitary groups using punishment violence. Eighteen of the twenty attacks reported over the last year were in republican areas; fifteen of these have been claimed by a dissident republican group called “Oglaigh na hEireann,” while the others were claimed by the Continuity IRA and the Real IRA (Pressly). Jim Auld, director of CRJ, expressed his concerns about the implications of a return to the use of punishment violence:

The dissident republican groups want to show they're invaluable to the community. In overall terms those groups have very minimal support. But if they are seen to be dealing with persistent offenders who're engaging in anti-social activities, the community sees that and by and large will support it (Pressly).

That the work of CRJ is integral to stabilizing the area is apparent here. With any luck, the increase in attacks will produce more concentrated efforts by groups like CRJ and others committed to nonviolence to engage directly with the community and discourage those who remain tempted to turn to paramilitaries. The PSNI should also step up their

efforts towards increasing community confidence in their accountability and effectiveness by giving due diligence to the policing needs of nationalist communities.

One valuable lesson Orde has learned from his experience as head of the PSNI is that only through dialogue can conflict be ended in any sort of an enduring way (Pressly). Indeed, dialogue is the heart of the process which leads to peace—this much is evidenced by the work of Community Restorative Justice to repair relationships and build safer communities, by the day-to-day experiences of the nationalist community as they turn to the police to respond to crime in their areas, and by the various nationalist and unionist political parties as they fight the “battle a day” to make the institutions work for the people (Adams, “Two years”). As Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams emphasized at the time of the historic vote to sign on to policing (“Adams urges”) and continues to stress today in the face of dissident republican threats to the peace process (McDonald and Bowcott), struggles are not won without the political will and support of the people—a reality which appears to be lost on those who continue to resort to violence as a means to achieve their ends.

Indeed, the recent actions by First Minister Robinson and Deputy First Minister McGuinness reflect the importance of dialogue as well as the spirit and tenor of Senator George Mitchell’s remarks in his 1996 report—there is a powerful desire for peace in the north, and it is that desire, combined with the willingness to take risks for peace that create the opportunities on which to build for the future (Mitchell). Such willingness was demonstrated by McGuinness, as he took a public stand against dissident violence and asked the community to support the police. For the peace process to work, Mitchell said, it must truly be an exercise in democracy—meaning that all political issues must be resolved using exclusively peaceful means (Mitchell). As the authors of the Blue Book note, Mitchell recognized the fundamental relationship that exists between efforts to end punishment violence and the long-term success of the peace process (Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie), and the recent violence and upsurge in punishment attacks make clear the impact that restorative justice can have as an exercise of local democracy within a broader movement for change. CRJ’s role in repairing relationships between and amongst neighbors, strengthening community networks, reworking political relationships

and empowering people to become active participants in their local areas has met with great success and continues to make critical contributions to the future.

Conclusions and contributions

University of Maryland Professor Gar Alperovitz insists that it is necessary to actively envision systems designs that are compatible with the principles of sustainability if we are to realize the sort of development we seek. The prevailing discourse on sustainable development has become unsustainable, argues Alperovitz—though differing conceptualizations of the term exist, any possible route to sustainability requires a culture of community firmly based in a supportive institutional structure in order to be fully capable of achieving the required level of change (Alperovitz 61). Community-based projects such as businesses and co-ops, or other local initiatives that reinforce community life and strengthen the social fabric and culture form “seedlings” upon which accountable institutions more consistent with the principles of sustainability may grow. He writes, “If we agree that the experience of being part of a community is one necessary element of a sustainable system, then one obvious need is to assemble and assess such fragments and build upon the rest of them” (Alperovitz 62). Here, Alperovitz’s research reflects the marriage of ideas contained in this thesis.

Sustainability is a process built upon a community’s desire to create alternatives; a holistic visioning and revisioning of the future where human rights and quality of life issues must always take center stage. For far too long has the mainstream environmental movement overlooked the fundamental incompatibility of structural inequalities and sustainability. As Puthenkalem asserts, only when people are secure in their daily lives will the world be at peace; and it is only when peace and justice are recognized as critical foundations of sustainable development that communities will have the agency and opportunity necessary to maximize their potential and be able to drive true sustainable, transformative change at the grassroots. “There will be no shortcuts to independence and a new Ireland,” Gerry Adams remarked on the occasion of the landmark nationalist decision to accept policing—much the same can be said for the road to sustainability, for it is a learning process that requires a commitment to a future that embraces change, a concerted effort to rework, rebuild and reconceptualize relationships, and a vision of the

environment that moves well beyond the “green issues.” There will be no shortcuts to sustainability—only a human-rights centered analysis combined with an institutional structure designed to support and sustain communities will open up the spaces necessary to formulate, re-formulate and implement new and inclusive visions and strategies that ensure no one gets left behind.

The peace-building process in a post-conflict area like the north of Ireland—and West Belfast in particular—can provide fertile ground on which to explore new avenues towards sustainable development. The citizens of the north of Ireland are engaged in a daily learning process that approximates the process of sustainability—from working to end punishment violence and rebuilding relationships at the neighborhood level through their participation in the likes of CRJ, to the political transformation taking place as former enemies engage in the business of politics. Residents are building bridges across traditional community divides, demanding levels of accountability and responsibility from government to a degree which has never before been experienced, and are constantly involved in articulating and creating the kinds of changes they’d like to see come to life in their communities. Such is the essence of community-based sustainable development, where each community defines its own needs and parameters. What may be critical for one area, may be less so in another. As the particularly perceptive Centre for Cross Border Studies survey respondent noted, sustainable development in Northern Ireland *is* the peace process.

Related to this is the idea that the limitations of a narrow framework for sustainable development can prevent creative solutions to urgent problems, as argued by Shellenberger, Nordhaus, and Brown. New alternatives are possible if we look at environmental problems through a social justice lens (Agyeman and Evans). This thesis presents restorative justice as an example of a democratic, community-based effort to challenge the use of punishment violence as a means of solving problems—an effort that, in practice, empowers people and builds the community’s capacity to confront the quality of life issues that so often stand in the way of sustainable community development. I chose CRJ as a case study because its contributions are multifold: while the work of restorative justice can ameliorate problems in a non-violent and blame-free manner and possibly prevent new disputes from occurring—thereby creating safer, healthier

communities—CRJ also nurtures active citizens and increases their participation in local democracy. “They stand poised to serve as a conduit, a broker and a bridge between members of their local community and the State,” writes Mika (X). Though CRJ has indeed created a new way of dealing with an urgent problem in the community, its impact reaches further, helping to develop and reinforce the sort of mobilized citizenry necessary to bring a vision of sustainability to life. CRJ contributes to sustainable community development not only as an example of the sort of community seedling to which Alperovitz refers; in nurturing local participation and empowerment it also, in effect, creates seedlings of its own.

Areas for further research

CRJ was born out of a particular set of social and political circumstances, and represents a response to the needs of a particular community. How might we identify and support similar efforts and contributions to peace, justice and sustainable development in other communities? How important is the context of post-conflict peace-building to the level of community participation in the visioning process? How might we apply the lessons learned from restorative justice to other marginalized areas that are not post-conflict societies? How successful have restorative justice projects been in areas that lack the amount of social capital found in West Belfast? Just sustainability calls for a broadly shared understanding of the linkages that exist between inequality, injustice and environmentally unsustainable practices, with an emphasis on local solutions to local problems. How might mainstream environmental movements organized around the more traditional “green” issues integrate the broader themes of peace and justice into their work, while promoting more fluid, community-based site-specific solutions to the sustainable development challenge?

Peace-building and post-conflict recovery are about “building back differently and better”, noted Derry-based entrepreneur Garvan O’Doherty at a recent Community Relations Council meeting in Belfast (Ó Muilleoir, “Lauren’s progress”). O’Doherty spoke on the topic of economic investment, arguing that the political, security and economic solutions to conflict are inextricably linked. It is impossible to prioritize one over the other as all are essential, he argued, echoing the concept of joined-up thinking so

central to the just sustainability paradigm. “Economics make peace possible and act as a powerful force for moderation. The economic dimension is essential in conflict resolution, only with the prospect of ongoing prosperity can a political solution become longlasting peace,” O’Doherty stated (Ó Muilleoir, “Lauren’s progress”).

The beauty of the concept of joined-up thinking is that it allows us to build upon our common strengths and work together to solve our problems. Community Restorative Justice is just one part of a broader community-based effort to address the sort of quality of life and social justice issues that give rise to so many of society’s developmental problems. West Belfast is home to a remarkable number of grassroots organizations, and while each should be acknowledged and celebrated for their contributions to the well-being of the community, it is simply inappropriate to expect a historically marginalized area to pull itself out of poverty and neglect on its own. If peace-building, post-conflict recovery and sustainable development are about building back differently and better, they require the dedication necessary to see through substantive changes, and the commitment to not repeat the mistakes of the past. In a historically marginalized area like West Belfast, many community initiatives were created as a response to sectarian prejudice and neglect; to continue their success these local efforts require not only governmental support and encouragement, but targeted economic investment as well. The need for leadership in these areas is integral to the success of both the peace process and the development of sustainable communities.

Environmental justice is about empowering people to take charge of their lives—to educate, organize and mobilize their communities around the issues they feel are important (Ó Muilleoir, “Lauren’s progress”). The just sustainability paradigm takes this one step further, combining sustainable development concerns with the socio-economic thrust of environmental justice, taking leadership from communities to determine scope whilst not losing sight of the collaborative effort necessary to create holistic change. In so doing, just sustainability becomes the future of the environmental movement.

“Change must always be tested on how it has reshaped access to the exercise and accountability of power,” argues Irish human rights campaigner Inez McCormick (Ó Muilleoir, “Power”)—a statement that reflects the essence of the quest for environmental justice. If the pursuit of healthy and sustainable livelihoods is primarily about addressing

power imbalances and improving access to financial and political power (Schweizer), then the strength of communities like West Belfast must be backed up by government-supported strategies to improve access to jobs and economic investment. Only real, substantive change will level the playing field, and ensure that all citizens are empowered and able to pursue a peaceful and democratic future and participate in the process which leads to peace.

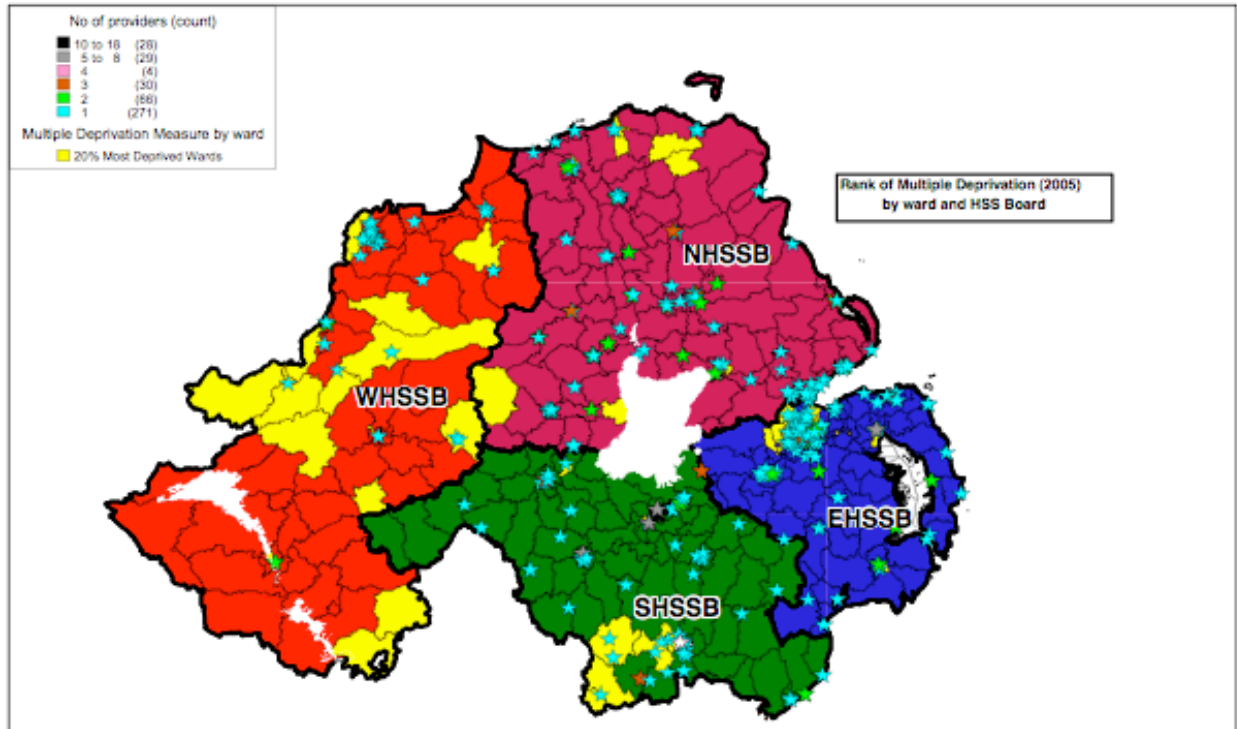
Appendix A: Interview Schedule and Sample Questions

<u>Name/Affiliation</u>	<u>Date of Interview</u>
Callie Persic, West Belfast Partnership Board	2 August 2006
Francis Stone, Falls Community Council	2 August 2006
Glen Phillips, Fáilte Feirste Thair	3 August 2006
Liam Stone, Upper Springfield Development Trust	3 August 2006
Pilib Ó Ruanaí, Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta	3 August 2006
Jim Girvan, Springboard Opportunities & Sinn Féin	4 August 2006
Eoin Ó Broin, Sinn Féin Department of European Affairs	5 August 2006
Michael Brown, Sinn Féin	7 August 2006
Laurence McKeown, Coiste na Iarchimí	7 August 2006
Harry Maguire, Community Restorative Justice	7 August 2006
Anonymous, CRJ client	9 August 2006
Bill Groves, Safer Neighborhoods Project	9 August 2006
John Allsopp, CRJ	9 August 2006
John Fox, CRJ	9 August 2006
Hugh Doyle, CRJ	11 August 2006
Máire Garland, CRJ	11 August 2006
Teresa Clarke, CRJ	11 August 2006
Deborah Watters, Alternatives	11 August 2006

Sample Questions

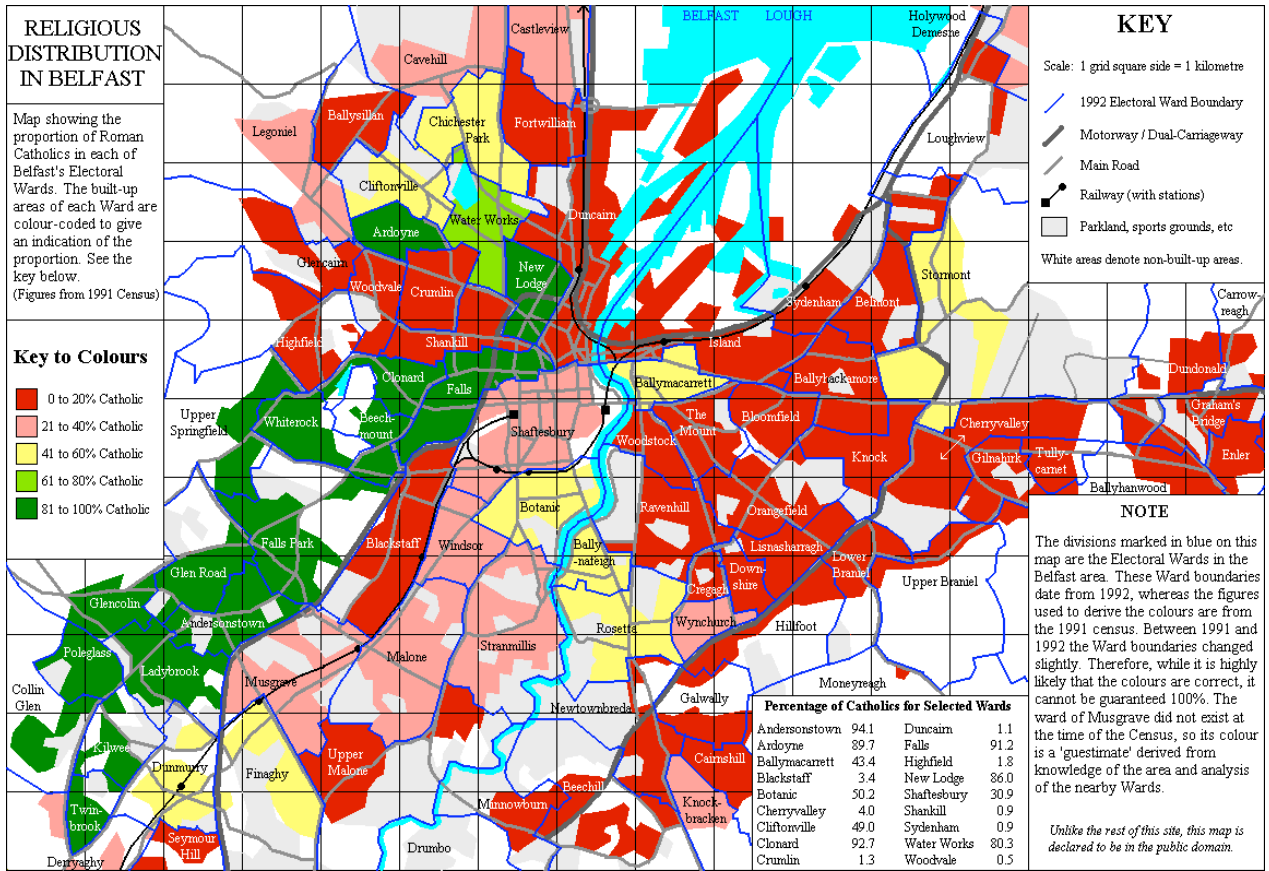
- Do you self-identify as a community and/or social justice activist? What if any other projects and organizations do you participate in?
- How do you define “community”? Which community or communities do you consider yourself to be a part of?
- In what way, if any, do you feel the work of CRJ contributes to the quality of life in this community?
- Do you feel that the work of CRJ is necessary to create more political stability in the area? Explain.
- Can you elaborate on some of the positive contributions that CRJ makes to the community?
- What kind of positive influence has your involvement in CRJ had on you? Has it taught you any particular skills that are helpful in other parts of your life?
- Are you familiar with the term “environmental justice”? What does it mean to you?
- Would you consider crime and anti-social behavior, or the conflict situation in general, to be an “environmental” problem in any way? Explain.

Appendix B: Deprivation Map for Northern Ireland



(Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency)

Appendix C: Religious Geography of Belfast



(Conflict Archive on the Internet)

Appendix D: Principles of Environmental Justice

Delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held on October 24-27, 1991, in Washington DC, drafted and adopted 17 principles of Environmental Justice. Since then, The Principles have served as a defining document for the growing grassroots movement for environmental justice.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

- 1) Environmental Justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.
- 2) Environmental Justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
- 3) Environmental Justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
- 4) Environmental Justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.
- 5) Environmental Justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.
- 6) Environmental Justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
- 7) Environmental Justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

8) Environmental Justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

9) Environmental Justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.

10) Environmental Justice considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

11) Environmental Justice must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

12) Environmental Justice affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13) Environmental Justice calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

14) Environmental Justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15) Environmental Justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16) Environmental Justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17) Environmental Justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

(“Principles of Environmental Justice”)

Appendix E: Comhar’s Framework for Sustainability as Organized by Themes and Underlying Principles

Satisfaction of human needs by the efficient use of resources

1. The use of non-renewable resources should be minimized.
2. Use of hazardous/polluting resources and wastes created should be minimized; waste management should be environmentally sound.

Equity between generations

3. Renewable resources should be used within the capacity for regeneration.
4. The quality of water and soils resources should be maintained and improved.

Respect for ecological integrity and diversity

5. The diversity of wildlife, habitats and species should be maintained and improved.

Equity between countries and regions

6. Air and atmosphere should be protected and human-induced effects on climate minimized.
7. The development of resource potential in one region should not compromise the ability of other regions to achieve their own potential.

Social equity

8. Social inclusion should be promoted to ensure an improved quality of life for all.
9. Sustainable development depends on cooperation and agreement between states.

Respect for cultural heritage/diversity

10. The quality of landscapes, the heritage of the man-made environment and historic and cultural resources should be maintained and improved.

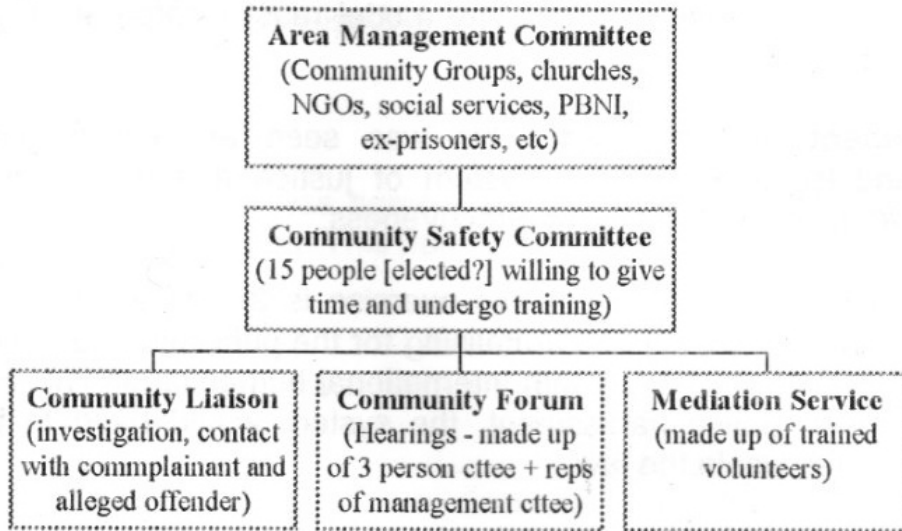
Good decision-making

11. Decision-making should be devolved to the appropriate level.
12. Stakeholder participation should be promoted at all levels of decision-making.

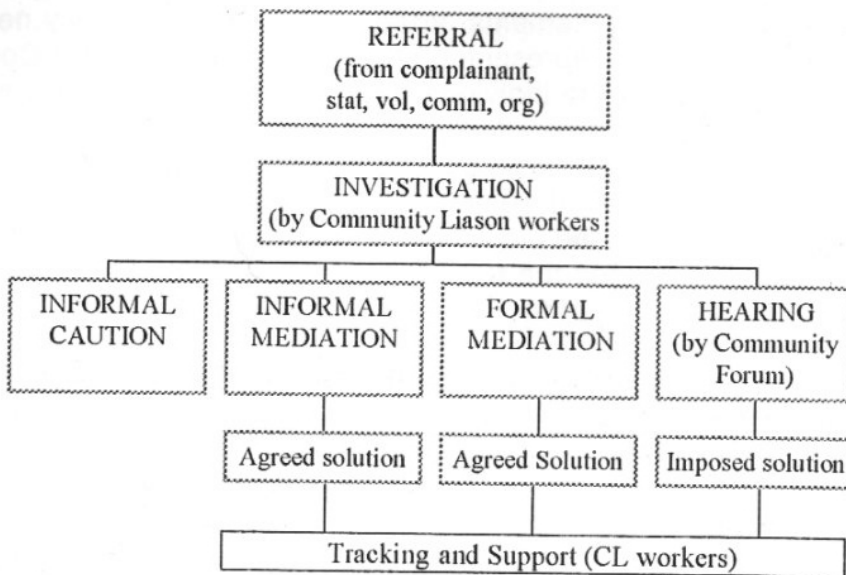
(“Principles of Sustainable Development”)

Appendix F: Community Restorative Justice Ireland Structure and Process

Structure



Process



(Auld, Gormally, McEvoy and Ritchie, 1999)

Appendix G: Sample Community Charter, CRJI

A Draft Community Charter

Accepting that recognition and acceptance of the collective, and individual, rights and associated responsibilities of all the members of our community is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace for all of us and acknowledging the need to consistently promote and advance a supportive social and physical environment as essential to the development of the potential of all in our neighbourhood we, the residents of "....." commit ourselves to the promotion of a new spirit and infrastructure designed to build a better community.

In keeping with this commitment we agree to work collectively, jointly and separately as appropriate to ensure and reaffirm the dignity and worth of all who live here regardless of gender, race, religion, language, disability, sexuality or age and to strive to the best of our abilities to promote social justice, supportive relationships and an associated physical environment for all who live in our community. This dignity and human worth is enshrined in a combination of rights and linked responsibilities.

We affirm that everyone in our community has the right to:

- Be free from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment;
- Fair trial;
- Shelter, warmth and basic living necessities;
- Freedom from externalised fear and anxiety;
- Privacy;
- Own property alone or in association with others;
- Free Association;
- Information and Freedom of opinion and expression;
- Choice of sexuality;
- Education and Learning opportunities and resources;
- Appropriate care and support;
- Open expression or celebration of their religious, cultural or political affiliation;
- Political participation;
- Equal protection under the law;
- Equality of access to public service;
- Work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment;
- Rest and leisure and to share in the cultural and artistic life of the community.

We also hold that we each have a responsibility to ensure that we do not create, or enhance, any condition, relationship or situation which may prevent our neighbours from exercising or enjoying their rights as outlined.

Given that a major factor in the negation of the rights of our residents is crime and the fear of crime, we believe our community must address this issue, its causes and its consequences, with humanity, consistency and as a matter of urgency. Ensuring that our model of justice includes both restorative elements and proportionate treatment, recognising that we must distinguish between the various criminal, deviant and anti-social behaviours and differentiating between crime against the person, against property and that which can be generally classified as nuisance, we commit ourselves to confronting crime and its effects on our community.

Each signatory to this Charter pledges to respect the rights of his/her neighbours in the community and appropriately to exercise her/his own responsibilities.

In keeping with this pledge **we reject violence** as a tool for resolving disagreement between individuals or families and as an alternative we will initiate and/or will co-operate in any agreed community systems or processes involving informal or formal mediation to resolve disputes or respond to crime, and to criminal or anti-social behaviour within our community.

Should such extensive processes of mediation prove not to be effective in resolving a dispute due to the unwillingness or refusal of any of the parties to the dispute to co-operate or meet their responsibilities we will further commit ourselves to participating in any non-violent activity collectively agreed in open discussion within the community. Such activity should be designed to ensure that those who refuse to comply with their responsibilities are subjected to the collective disapproval of the community expressed if necessary through boycott or any other non-violent process as may be necessary to protect the rights of individuals or groups in our area.

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