

Area Research Report 2023 Derry/ Londonderry

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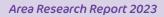








The Executive Programme on Paramilitarism & Organised Crime





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The Authors hope that the content of this Report offers a valuable insight into how people residing in Derry/Londonderry feel about a variety of issues associated with their local area.



INTRODUCTION

The Research Team involved in the development of this Report were tasked with developing Area Reports for each of the sites where the Communities in Transition programme is currently active. Communities in Transition is one strand of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime. The Executive Office NI leads the policy development of Communities in Transition, in partnership with Co-operation Ireland and Queen's University Belfast.

The programme aims to support areas where there has been a history of paramilitary activity and coercive control. The primary objective is to support the transition of these sites to a point where paramilitary groups no longer exercise influence, and their activity is no longer as prevalent. To achieve this ambition, Communities in Transition funds a range of over 30 innovative and community focused projects. These projects are designed to increase the capacity of each area and are categorised under the following headings: Area Regeneration; Capacity Building; Community Safety and Policing; Environment and Culture; Health and Wellbeing; Personal Transition; Restorative Practice; and Young People. Our Area Reports will identify the on-going challenges that exist throughout each Communities in Transition site. We will also point to the key work that is aimed at stimulating sustained change in the areas.

DERRY/LONDONDERRY

Communities in Transition activity in Derry/Londonderry focuses on Creggan and Brandywell. Previous research in Derry/Londonderry has identified that it is an area that is impacted by various types of crime and disorder. The Department of Justice NI (DOJ. 2021) found that 78% of residents, whom they engaged in a Household Survey, felt that drug related crime was a 'very' or 'fairly' common problem in the area. Just under half (45%) of those surveyed also indicated that paramilitary style attacks were a 'very' or 'fairly' significant problem and 81% identified anti-social behaviour as a recurring problem.

Furthermore, a survey from Phase 1 of Communities in Transition, found that 51% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that crosscommunity violence was an issue in their area (Sturgeon and Bryan, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this Report is on presenting a 'bottom up' assessment of the key issues relevant to the residents of Derry/Londonderry. The focus is not on re-presenting the many very valuable pre-existing data sets that exist elsewhere. Such data sets provide important indications of the overall capacity of the area, but often fail to tease out the correlating lived experiences. In this Report, we wish to address this gap in our understanding of the Communities in Transition sites.

To appropriately engage with participants we designed a methodology that ensured their opinion was positioned at the centre of our work. We took a mixed methods approach that utilised PGIS Mapping Software, Qualitative Interviews and a Household Survey.

Participants were invited to identify and mark specific categories of place, such as where things are getting better, where things are getting worse, where they feel safe or unsafe using a 'spraycan' tool on a computerised map of the local area. The individual marked maps were then aggregated to generate a collective view of the site.

Recorded Qualitative Interviews were conducted in conjunction with the completion of the Spraycan exercise, allowing the Research Team to tease out the overall capacity of the area along-side correlating lived experiences, both positive and negative. Participants in this qualitative element of our research were recruited with the assistance of Com-munities in Transition Delivery Partners. Interviews took place in local community settings in Spring 2022.

In this area, 26 people participated in our PGIS mapping exercise and accompanying qualitative interview – 22 of these individuals identified as Nationalist and 4 as Other (neither Nationalist nor Unionist).

Household Survey – Overview

- 150 people from across Creggan and Brandywell and surrounding areas took part in the Household Survey survey, carried out by market research company, Perceptive Insight in Spring 2022.
- 130 identified themselves as Catholic, 8 were Protestant and 12 identified as neither.
- 72 Participants were male and 78 participants were female.
- 128 participants were Nationalist, 10 were Unionist and 12 identified as 'other'.
- The participants were aged between 19 and 76.

Derry/Londonderry



COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

In this section, we assess the ways in which participants feel attached to their local area.

Household Survey

Two key findings emerged from the Survey findings, which indicated that there was a strong sense of community attachment in this area.

- 86% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that there was a strong sense of community throughout Derry/Londonderry. The average response across all the CIT sites was 66%.
- 82% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt connected to their local area.

The average response across all the CIT sites was 68%).

Spraycan Mapping Tool

- 26 participants completed the Spraycan Mapping Tool.
- 22 identified themselves as 'Nationalist' and 4 designated as 'Other'.
- Nationalist participants identified that their 'community' spans the space that is commonly considered to be within the boundaries of the Creggan. Participants who identified as 'Other' marked space in a largely similar way.

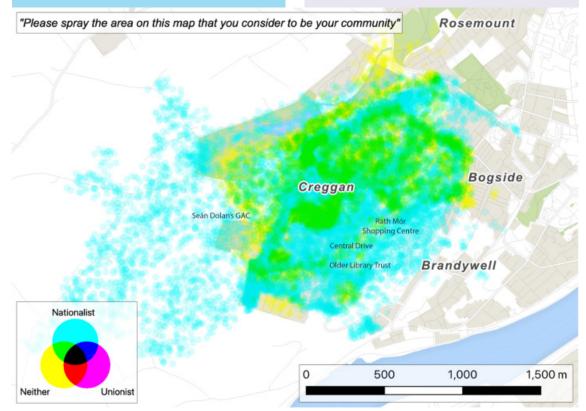


Figure 1: Community Attachment in Derry/Londonderry CIT area.

The majority of participants felt that there were high levels of community spirit throughout the Creggan area of Derry/Londonderry.

'Yeah, the whole area... the whole of Creggan... that's my community – it's one big community. Everyone together.'

Participants regularly spoke about a strong sense of community and a collective will to identify and resolve key issues that emerged in a communal manner.

'We do have a lot issues in this area, but we have a very strong sense of community... and when issues do come along, there's a very strong response from everyone... together.'

'It's a very friendly area... despite some problems in the area... I think people largely feel safe. Everyone knows everybody. There's a good strength and resilience about... and I suppose in periods of adversity, people come together and do their bit.'

Despite acknowledging that the area suffers from different types of deprivation, participants were keen to stress the strength of the area.

'There is... there is a decent infrastructure... in comparison with other areas... by that I mean both capital and... revenue.' Participants regularly stated that they had no desire to leave the area. They also indicated that there were long waiting lists to get a house in the site.

For the most part, participants indicated that this was a largely settled community, with many longterm residents. It was noted that a number of these long-term residents are key leaders in the area.

'No, I'd like to stay here for as long as I can. I only moved to the area 3... 4 years ago, but I'd like to stay here for as long as I can.'_

'Some people might feel intimidated by the Creggan... from the outside, but everyone in the Creggan loves it and never wants to leave.'

Participants noted the local GAA and soccer clubs were important social networks and both acted as key community platforms for engagement between residents.

'Sean Dolan's (GAC) is a really important place... is a good place to bring the community together and there's probably a lot of families linked into the club in a lot of different ways.'



KEY FACILITIES

In this section we identify the key facilities that are important to participants. We probe how these spaces are utilised and ask whether there are places that people would like to use; but chose not to.

Household Survey

- 16% of participants indicated they were involved with a Local Church.
- 25% were associated with a Sports Club.
- 18% were involved in a Local School.
- 8% participated in Neighbourhood Associations.

Spraycan Mapping Tool

- Most participants marked the Sean Dolan's GAC club and Trojans FC soccer club as important spaces in the Spraycan Mapping exercise.
- Community centres, such as the Old Library Trust and St Marys Youth Centre, were also identified by the majority of participants.
- New housing near Blighs Lane was also important, given the amount of demand locally for accomodation in the area.
- The Rath Mor shopping centre was considered to be the main retail space in the site.

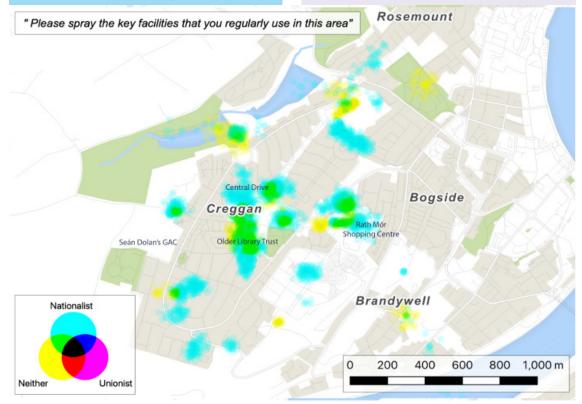


Figure 2: Key Facilities in Derry/Londonderry CIT area.

The majority of participants marked Central Drive as an important space. It acts as a location where the community comes together to shop, exercise and mix. However as we will explain in Section 4 some participants had concerns about the space (particularly in relation to their sense of safety).

'I think, yeah Central Drive is a key space – it kind of brings the community together... you know, I'll shop there with my sister. I'll go to the Old Library Trust for classes... do you know what I mean?'

Some participants felt that retail spaces around Fanard Drive and Central Drive needed to be upgraded. It was noted that some of the shops had become vacant. It was also suggested that both areas needed to be better lit.

Almost every participant spoke about the importance of sport in the area and noted the GAA and soccer clubs were strongly supported by residents.

'I think sport is important here... culturally, I think it's always been important to bring people together... for bonding. I think most people (in the area) are involved in at least one of the clubs... quite a few will be involved in both.' Participants spoke about the importance of key community spaces, occupied by CIT projects. Both the Old Library Trust and St Mary's Youth Centre were recognised as offering the entire community, but specifically young people, important developmental opportunities.

'I think virtually every child that comes into this centre (St Mary's), will tell you... if they weren't here, they'd probably be off doing something they shouldn't be. Given how many young people we work with... can you imagine the scale of criminality, if this didn't exist?'

'I think the (Old Library) Trust is a reference point for the community. if you had a problem... or wanted to start a class or a course... that's where you'd go. I think most of the good things happening in the area comes from there... and they're kind of leading the way for change... but are trying to make sure they bring everyone with them.'



COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING BETTER

In this section, we identify the current community capacity that exists in Derry/Londonderry Communities in Transition area, with a specific focus on identifying things that have improved within the area.

Household Survey

- 96% of respondents indicated that they would know who to contact if they had a problem associated with their community. The average across all the CIT sites was 84%
- 75% agreed or strongly agreed that they had the skills to help change their area for the better. The average across all the CIT sites was 50%.
- 55% of respondents felt the area would be in better condition in five years time. The average across all the CIT sites was 29%.

Spraycan Mapping Tool

- Participants who completed the Spraycan Mapping Tool indicated that new housing in Blighs Lane and elsewhere was important.
- The upgrades to community centres, including Old Library Trust and St Mary's Youth Club, were important to most participants.

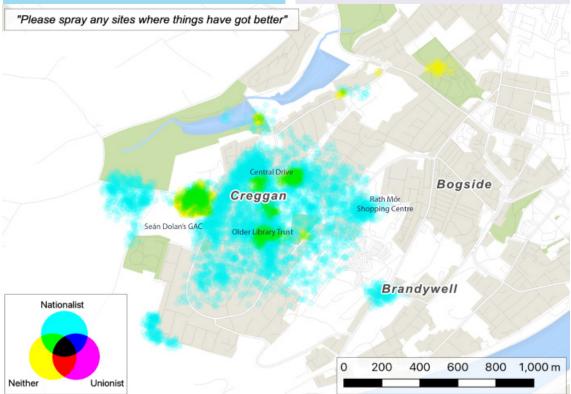


Figure 3: Locations in Derry/Londonderry area where things have got better.

Participants felt that new highquality housing was important.

'Yeah... we definitely need more housing. Our daughter and her son are living with us at the minute, because the waiting list for housing is so long! She was supposed to leave before Christmas, but it fell apart... and the demand is high... she'll be with us for a while yet.'

'People don't want to leave the area, so we need a lot more housing... good houses as well. They need to be big enough for people with families.'

The importance of developing and upgrading community spaces was stressed by participants.

'St Marys Community Centre... has recently been redeveloped. That's a really important place for our young people... Old Library Trust it was done... probably 10/15 years ago... it's a great space.'

'Sean Dolan's (GAC) is getting a new indoor facility... that'll be very important. It's another key space for the community.' Participants also identified that there are on-going discussions to try and develop new spaces for the community to come together and to think creatively about how to better utilise underdeveloped sites.

'I think Creggan Country Park is really up for grabs... that could be anything... you could have activities for kids... for adults... you could have a zip line... you put in a BMX track... have some proper activities.'

'Better linking in the schools and youth clubs... together... that's really important... so that the kids who are struggling in one place, they can get support from both sets of employees. You know... getting different bodies to work together to recognise where we have risks and where we have specific young people who might have an issue.'



COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING WORSE

In this section, we identify some key problems that have emerged in Derry/ Londonderry, which undermines the community capacity of the site.

Household Survey

- Only 28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had an influence over decisions that are made about their area.
 The average across all the CIT sites was 27%.
- 45% of participants indicated that in five years time, the area would be either in the same condition or worse.

The average across the CIT sites was 71%.

Spraycan Mapping Tool

- Participants indicated that the quality of shops and housing along Central Drive had declined in quality.
- They also indicated that some of the new housing constructed in the area was of a poorer quality than original housing.

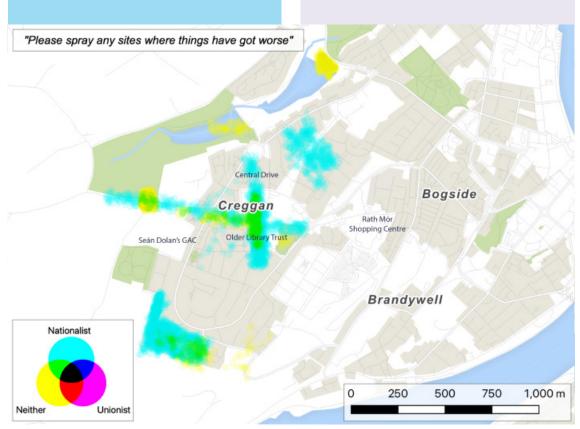


Figure 4: Locations in Derry/Londonderry area where things have got worse.

Almost every participant discussed concerns about the current condition of Central Drive. For some, the quality of shops had declined. For others, there were concerns about rubbish, graffiti and anti-social behaviour.

'It's (Central Drive) in a terrible state. That used to be a great spot to see people. You'd bump into people at the shops, but not now... I wouldn't really use them now.'

Other participants had indicated that it was also a site where they felt there were regular incidents of crime, specifically associated with paramilitaries.

'Awful. If something is going to happen in this area... it's going to be there. That's where... (lowers voice) that's where... if something were... if somethings going to be done to someone... that's where they'd take them... just out the back of the shops. Everyone locally... would know that. if you see someone going round there... it's trouble.'

Participants were also frustrated by the amount of traffic that exists along the road, particularly at the start and end times of the school day.

Participants identified a variety of other concerns about other locations and issues. A number of individuals were worried about the level of drug abuse and addiction that existed in the area. Unemployment and poor education outcomes were also identified as key problems. 'We've got a range of problems... going from childhood right to adulthood. We've a lack of provision for early years... we need changes there. There's a Creggan Action Plan that hopes to look at that. There's a need for capital and revenue investment. We need more places in the Surestart programme. There's a big need for speech and language therapy... you look at education... there's definitely a gap in training for those leaving full-time education. There's a lack of linkages.'

'Alcohol (additiction)... mental health... the risks of both... in terms of prevention and management... very big problems. There's a coordinated approach needed there.'

'The schools are a good quality... in terms of what they offer, but the facilities are awful and they need a lot of work.'

'We need the schools and shops (on Central Drive) lifted up. They've been allowed to decline, but they need a lot of work just now. The shops and alleyway need a lot of work.'



COMMUNITY SAFETY - POINTS OF BELONGING

In this section, we identify how participants feel about the issue of community safety in Derry/ Londonderry, with a specific focus on locations where people feel safe.

Household Survey

Respondents to the survey were largely positive about the spirit of the community, regarding how it addressed incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour.

- 74% of respondents felt that local residents abided by the rule of law. The average response across all the CIT sites was 61%
- 81% felt that improved lighting and alleygating would make them feel safer, while 66% said improved relationships with the PSNI would also help. The average response across all the CIT sites was 60% & 59%

Spraycan Mapping Tool

 Most participants involved in the Spraycan Mapping exercise indicated that they largely felt safe throughout the entirety of the Creggan area.

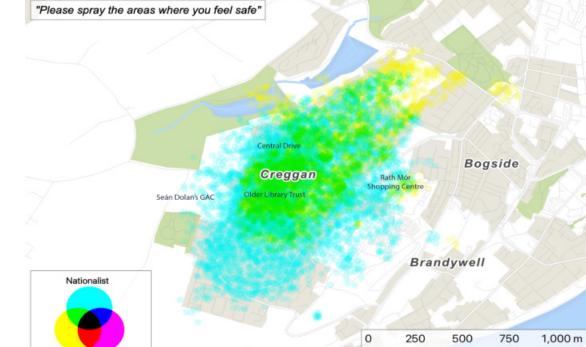


Figure 5: Locations in Derry/Londonderry area where people feel safe.

Neither

Unionist

Participants attributed their sense of safety in the area to familiarity of the people and landscape. Many of the participants were long-term residents of the area.

'I suppose I know most people... or at least, I feel like I do... you know? Also, I probably know where or where not to go... you know, there's definitely places I wouldn't go at night, but once you know that. Once that's established... life is easy enough.'

'Yeah, just knowing people helps. There's nowhere I wouldn't go.'

'I have no sort of political allegiances or alliances... so I feel free from all of that.'

Participants aged 30 or over were more likely to feel more universally safe than those aged under 30. Some participants indicated that this was likely because they were 'less of a target' and others indicated that they had strong community connections and social networks that helped make them feel safe.

'I think when you think of safety... or lack of safety...people probably think it's the wee granny who's at most risk... actually... I think most wouldn't have an interest in her. Groups of young men are probably more likely to attack another young man. Do you know what I mean? I'd say young men walking home at night are probably at most risk. Maybe young women, but I think there's a sense that young men wanted to 'test' one another. You know? 'Test him out... see if we can intimidate him.' Some of that has got to do with

paramilitary groups... some of it, has just got to do with it being young men.'

Participants indicated that they largely felt safe in the area, despite many indicating that the local community had a poor relationship with the police.

'Would I call the police to an incident? No... never. How does a matter then get resolved? It just does... I suppose... if it's really bad, someone will probably call the police, but you're more likely to see it just getting dealt with internally... you know? Not a 'punishment' beating or anything... it just gets resolved.'

'I don't think I could (call the police). There's not a... I just wouldn't. There would probably be a reaction... that you've over-reacted by calling them. When they do come... it's ridiculous... there's about seven vans of them. There's about 50 of them... all armed up... that's more likely to start a riot than anything. They look ready for battle and that's how it starts.'



COMMUNITY SAFETY – POINTS OF THREAT

In this section, we identify the feelings participants had about the issue of community safety in Derry/ Londonderry, with a specific focus on locations that made them feel unsafe.

Household Survey

While the respondents to the Survey indicated a number of concerns about their local area throughout their responses, there were two significant issues identified by a significant number of respondents:

- **52% felt anti-social behaviour** (ASB) was a problem in the area. The average across all the CIT sites was 55%.
- 51% believed that drug related crime was also a problem in the area. The average across all the CIT sites was 57%.

Spraycan Mapping Tool

 Participants who completed the Spraycan Mapping exercise were most likely to mark Central Drive as a location where they felt unsafe. They were specifically marking the shops and facilities along the road.

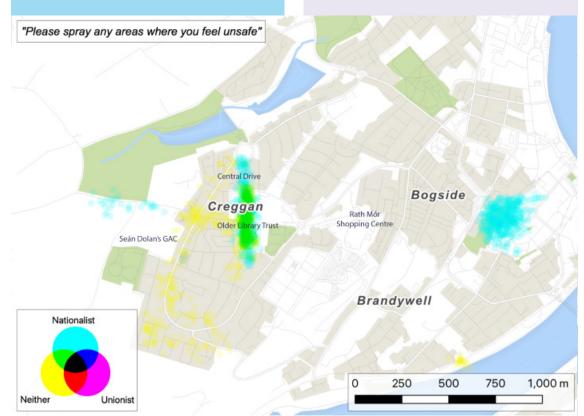


Figure 6: Locations in Derry/Londonderry area where people feel unsafe.

Almost every participant admitted that Central Drive was one of the few spaces in their local area where they felt unsafe.

Their concern about the area was largely attributed to the space being poorly lit and there being a 'history' of previous problems and incidents happening in the area.

'That's the one space where everyone probably feels uneasy. It didn't used to be like that, but it's an area that has been in real decline.'

'it's definitely a 'no-go' area. The alley behind the shops is... where the paramilitaries will take someone... take someone if they're going to give them a beating. So once there is a feeling of that... of that type of thing then the area is not going to recover.'

'it's just a bit wild. Do you know? It's got a lot rubbish, graffiti... and then just a proper undercurrent of something worse.'

Participants indicated that they would be particularly uneasy visiting the site at night and noted that there is a lot of young people 'hanging around' the area.

Aside from site specific concerns, some participants felt generally unsafe due to a communal pressure not to engage the justice system – this included feeling conflicted about whether they should use the police.

'That's a tough one. I think there are definitely a lot of people... who's it's very genuine for... not wanting to use the police. Then you've people... who I think just go with it... don't want to rock the boat by calling them. I think those that do call them, probably regret it... they make such a mess of things. Someone will call in with something and they'll either not come at all or send the whole Force. That really grinds people. They give the impression that we can't just come here... one or two cars, because we don't trust the community... then the young ones are hurling stuff at them... because there's so many of them... you've a full on riot over something that probably wasn't that big an issue.'

'Would I worry about calling them? Yeah, I probably would... I think I'd just leave it. You know... more trouble than it's worth.'

Participants indicated that different types of anti-PSNI and proparamilitary graffiti made them feel unsafe. There was a concern that these images serve to act to condition a certain mentality in the area.

Aside from concerns about criminality, some participants were also worried about the amount of traffic in the area and the speed at which people travel through the site.



INFLUENCE OF PARAMILITARY GROUPS AND/OR ORGANISED CRIME GANGS

In this section we present the ways in which participants felt that paramilitary groups and/or Organised Crime Gangs have an influence in Derry/Londonderry.

Household Survey

- 57% of respondents felt that young people living throughout the Derry/Londonderry were under too much influence from paramilitary groups. The average across all the CIT areas was 32%.
- 59% felt that paramilitary groups contribute to crime, drug dealing and ASB in the area. The average across all the CIT areas was 34%.
- 63% felt that paramilitary groups create fear and intimidation in the

area. The average across all the CIT areas was 27%.

 50% felt that paramilitary groups had a controlling influence in their area.

Spraycan Mapping Tool

- Participants who completed the Spraycan Mapping Tool felt that paramilitaries have a significant presence in the Ceggan area of Derry/Londonderry.
- The majority were most likely to identify Central Drive as a location where such groups were active.

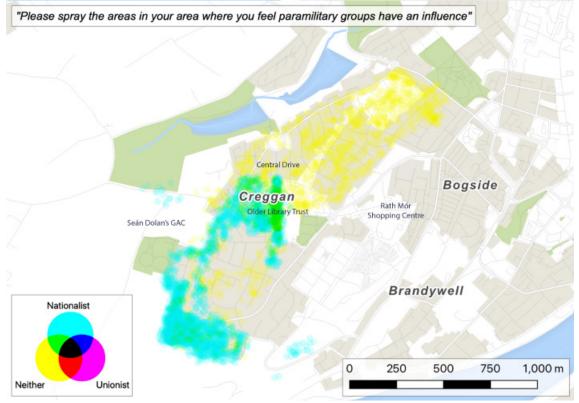


Figure 7: Influence of Paramilitary Groups and/or Organised Crime Gangs in Derry/ Londonderry area.

Almost every participant was concerned about the presence and activity of paramilitary groups to at least some extent.

Some participants wanted to know how the term paramilitary was being defined and questioned if the research should use different terminology – for example: organised crime gangs.

'I'm not sure what we have now... I mean if you want to... if it suits you for me to describe them as paramilitaries that's ok, but I think we just have crime gangs. Do you know what I mean? Crime gangs you would get in London, Dublin... I think maybe people feel differently and there's graffiti that implies they're more than that, but I don't think so. I think that's all they are... just criminals.'

'I think that's risky language... I think you're giving them more legitimacy than they deserve. You are saying that they can draw credibility from the past from the conflict... when maybe people felt that was needed, but now they're more likely to attack someone from this area than defend it from an outsider.'

Some participants felt that the lack of a visible PSNI presence likely provided paramilitary groups/ organised crime gangs with a platform to engage the community. Their perceived lack of presence was also a reason why it was suggested that residents may turn to a paramilitary group/organised crime gang to address a local community matter. 'They (PSNI) add to that tension (that exists in the area)... they turn up with 10 land rovers... and everyone is out of their house to see what the problem is. I can't tell you whether they come with 10 land rovers, because they're afraid of a riot... or if a riot brings the 10 land rovers, but the two issues are together.'

'They misread the situation every time.'

Most participants indicated that the majority of residents would not regularly worry about the presence of paramilitary groups/organised crime gangs and were rarely concerned about the threat they provided. It was generally suggested that they were accustomed to having the groups in the area.

'Yeah, they're just here... I'm not sure if they have an influence in the area... you know, day to day... but people know they're there. Would people worry about them? Not really... I think they're just used to them. Maybe when there's an incident, if someone is attacked then that's different, but people aren't overly concerned by them'



ENDNOTE 1: Household Survey

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

- 66% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that there was a strong sense of community throughout their area.
- 2. 68% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt connected to their local area.

KEY FACILITIES

- 3. 13% indicated they were involved with a local church.
- 4. 14% were involved in a local sports club.
- 5. 9% were involved in a local school.
- 6. 5% were involved in a neighbourhood association.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING BETTER

- 7. 84% indicated that that they would know who to contact if they had a problem associated with their community.
- 8. 50% felt that they had the skills to help change their area for the better.
- 9. 29% felt that their area would be in a better condition in five years time.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING WORSE

- 10. 27% agreed or strongly agreed that they had an influence over decisions that are made about their area.
- 11. 71% indicated that their area would either be in the same condition or worse off, in five years time.

COMMUNITY SAFETY – POINTS OF BELONGING

- 12. 61% of respondents felt that local residents in their area abided by the rule of law.
- 13. 60% indicated that changes to the local environment (including alley gating and/or extra street lighting) would help make people feel safer in their area.
- 14. 59% suggested that improved relationships with the PSNI would also help.

COMMUNITYY SAFETY – POINTS OF THREAT

- 15. 55% indicated that anti-social behaviour was a problem in their area.
- 16. 57% indicated that drug related crime was also a problem in the area.

INFLUENCE OF PARAMILITARY GROUPS AND/OR ORGANISED CRIME GANGS

- 17. 32% felt that locally based paramilitary groups had too much influence on young people living throughout their area.
- 18. 34% indicated that paramilitary groups create fear and intimidation in their area.
- 19. 27% noted that paramilitary groups had a controlling influence on their area.

ENDNOTE 2: SPRAYCAN MAPPING TOOL/PGIS SOFTWARE

The 'Spraycan' software constitutes a Participatory GIS (PGIS) interface that permits participants to answer spatial questions by drawing onto a Google map (or satellite image) using a 'spray can' (or 'airbrush') tool, as opposed to using traditional map-based drawing tools such as points and polygons.

The significance of this approach to participatory mapping relates to the way in which members of the public typically think about the world around them, and how this contrasts with the way in which we typically store these places in GIS software. People tend to think about the world in terms of places, which are typically vaguely defined, in that universally accepted and unequivocal boundaries cannot be determined for them. This is because places are defined by the individual perceptions, experiences and cognition of the participants, and so the extent of an area will necessarily vary between them.

Place-based models contrast with the space-based approaches that are used in typical GIS software, which require precision in the location and boundaries of these places. The use of such space-based representations for vague places enforces an 'artificial precision' (after Montello et al., 2003) onto them, resulting in a poor representation of the place in question – which will impact upon any subsequent interpretation and analysis. It has also been shown that people find it difficult to convert their place-based thoughts and feelings into spatial representations in this way, meaning that the imposition of

this 'artificial precision' also acts to reduce the quality of the data.

In order to avoid these negative effects, and the resulting challenges from incorporating findings into policy, we can use alternative map interfaces that are designed 'for purpose', of which the 'Spraycan' is a prominent example. In this case, participants can add data to the map without consideration of precise boundaries, as well as allowing them to change the density of the 'paint' (denoting variation in strength of feeling, for example). This approach facilitates either qualitative (e.g. Huck et al., 2019) or quantitative (e.g. Huck et al., 2014) interpretation, and has been applied to a range of environmental and socio-cultural problems worldwide, by a variety of organisations, governments and universities.



FURTHER READING

More information about the software and its motivations can be found in the following publications:

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