

SICRIE Project Presentation by the group from Belfast

SICRIE

Social inclusion on the cultural and
religious interfaces of Europe

Joe's reflections

Peace walls are a feature of life in Belfast designed to maintain peace by keeping communities apart.



Interfaces like this are not just physical barriers they are barriers in the mind and can only be taken down by the people who live on either side.

If they were to come down people on either side would discover they have the same issues to deal with in life.

The walls are a 24 hour reminder of what life was like in the past but a new generation shouldn't have to live with that past.

Industrial Belfast

This sculpture is on one of the peace walls. It is made up of nuts, bolts, cogs and washers from the factories that were part of Belfast's industrial past.



Kids Guernica



Kids Guernica is part of an international project established in Japan in 1995. The objective of the programme is for young people to produce Guernica style mural to the specifications of Guernica but using their own subject material.

This mural, part of the international mural on Belfast's Falls Road, is a reproduction of Picasso's interpretation of Guernica after it was bombed by the Germans

A New Dawn

What we hope for is a new dawn in politics and community relations in Northern Ireland.

Dawn Purvis used a pussy cat as part of her campaign – you can see it on the bottom right hand corner of the poster.



Rab in Sligo



This is Rab. He's one of the young people on our Education by Choice programme.

Young people like Rab are often written off by the educational system but through the programme Rab has become a successful gaming programmer. The programme helps remove the psychological interfaces by providing facilities for young people from both the Protestant and Catholic communities to develop their skills together.

You can find out more about the programme at:

<http://www.educationbychoice-aep.org/>
<http://www.trainingbychoice.org>

Having Fun

Drama plays a part in life development skills building confidence in communication skills and group cooperation among the young people from different sides of the interfaces.



Rural Donegal

Even in the situations of conflict
there are places of paradise
such as rural Donegal.



Wall murals in Belfast

One of the distinctive features of Belfast is the vast numbers of wall murals around the city.

The murals depict everything from masked gunmen of the various paramilitary organisations to comment on contemporary social and political issues around the world.

For many years during the conflict they were used to mark the territorial boundaries of particular communities, Loyalist or Republican.

This mural appeared on the Ravenhill Road, part of the area in which SICRIE project members live and work, and depicts a more normalised atmosphere.

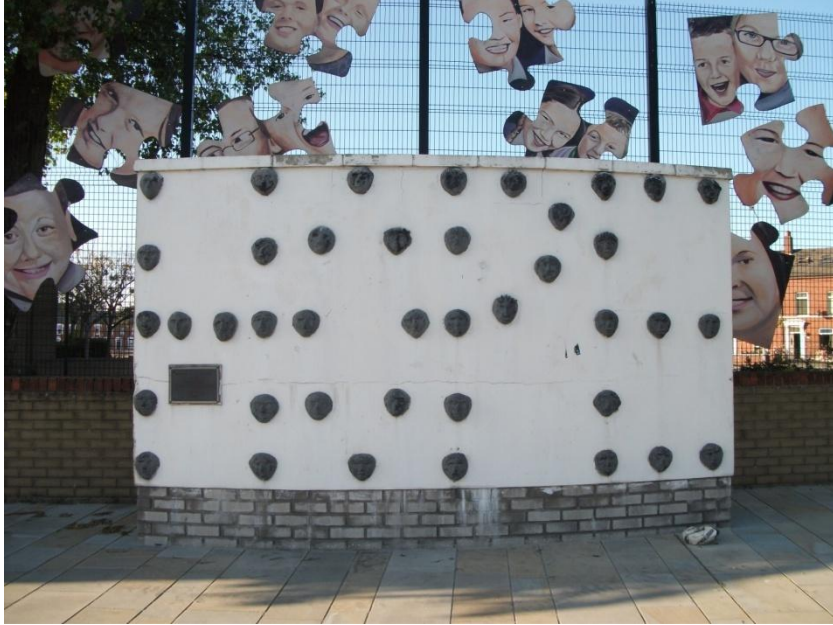


Unfortunately, just a few yards across the Ravenhill Road this more familiar image reappeared during the summer of 2011 and preceded some renewed, but fortunately limited, sectarian violence in the area.

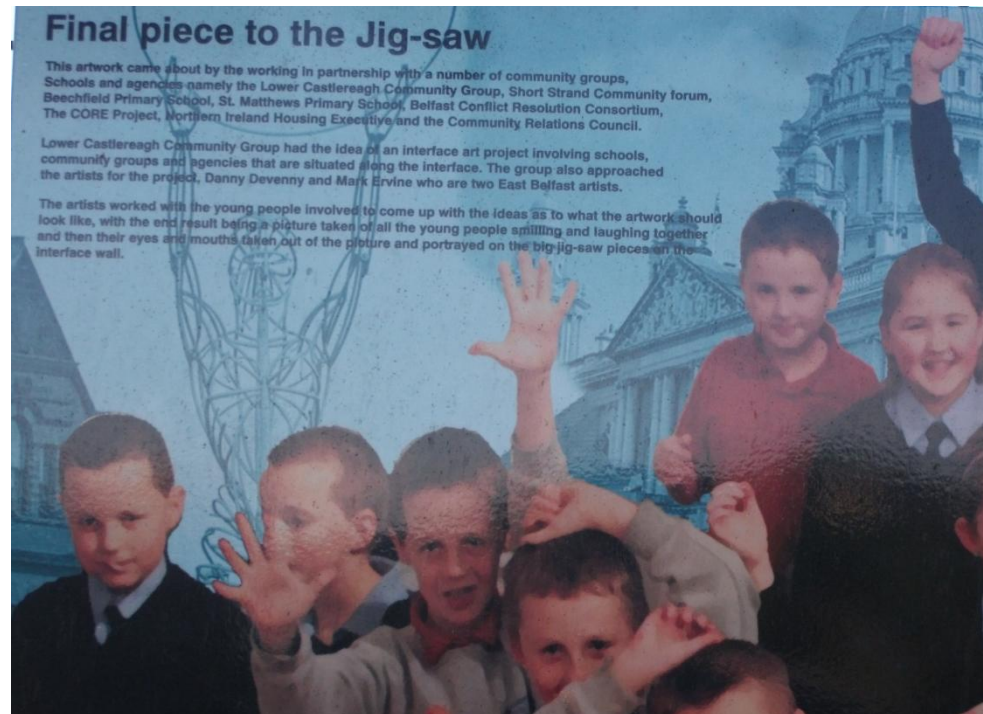


In the same area murals such as this one have appeared in more recent years. Replacing overtly militaristic murals they never-the-less ensure that the collective memory of injustice is preserved. While the information may be historically correct the intention is to keep alive suspicion and distrust – maintaining the interface.





Today the same interface is marked more by images looking to a new future for a new generation than by images of division and violence.



Belfast Murals

You can find lots of information and examples of the wall murals at the University of Ulster archive website:

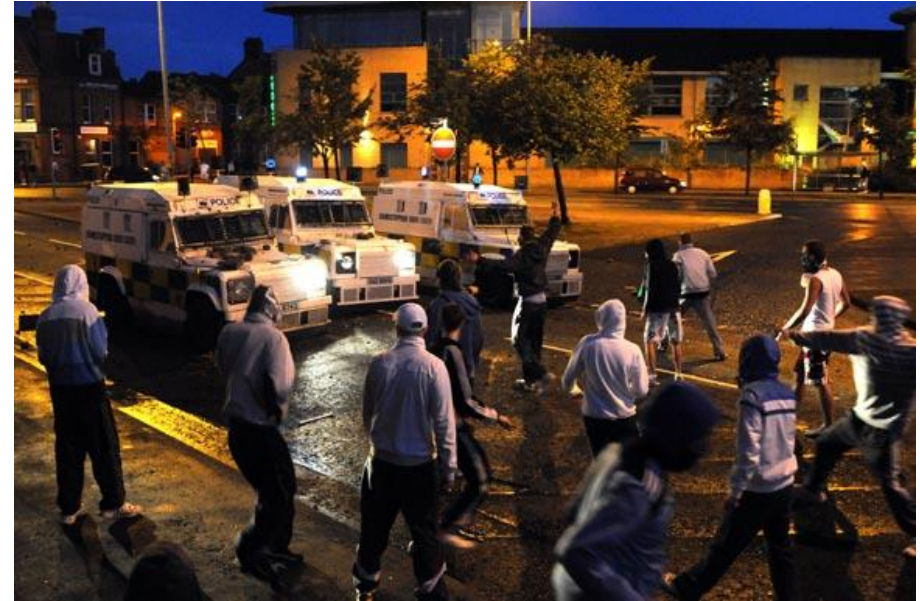
<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/murals/>

If you Google 'Belfast wall murals' you'll find plenty of images.

This mural appeared in Short Strand depicting one of the great characters of the community and speaking of a social history almost forgotten during the conflict.



The picture on the left is the road that marks the interface within East Belfast, the interface which members of Crosspaths involved in the SICRIE Project have transcended by friendship. The picture on the right shows something of the violence that erupted in 2002. It was following this that Crosspaths emerged along with other intercommunity organisations.



Crosspaths: meeting on an interface

John's reflections



Social distancing is another form of interface and keeps people apart. Social interaction humanises people, allowing people to find and share what they have in common.

A group of us from Catholic Nationalist and Protestant Unionist communities decided to revisit the issues of the first World War and travelled together to visit the Messines Project.





Messines was not just a WW1 strategic battle but an example of Ulstermen and Irish citizens fighting and dying together – a reality which was often concealed. The 16th Irish Division (mainly Catholic and Nationalist) fought side by side with their Northern Protestant fellow soldiers.

The fellowship of Messines brought us together around a shared sacrifice.

We used conflict as a means of bringing us together rather than keeping us apart.

One of the positive outcomes of the visit was that the social interaction meant that real friendships were established and we were forced to rethink how we can find a better future for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.



I think of these two poppies as representing soldiers from each of the Catholic Nationalist and Protestant Unionist communities who fought and died together.

Rediscovering their sacrifice has been a means of us, in our generation, finding each other.



Another group member's reflection:
Like many of my generation our lives during the 1970s were influenced and shaped in the context of violence and conflict.



Our city became identified with the peace walls on the Catholic Nationalist / Protestant Unionist interfaces.

There is a sense in which they are a silent witness to our story of division and conflict.



Today, while there's no agreement about taking down the barriers the gateways through the walls are opening up and trust is slowly being built between the communities.

I have led many tour groups round the city and it's interfaces including our partners in the SICRIE Project.



Another participants experience of crossing the interface.

Having grown up and lived in Protestant East Belfast my wife and I, along with our two year old daughter moved to live in Newry.

Newry was a predominantly Catholic community and many of our family and friends could not understand our decision to move. The experience was life changing.

People who move to Newry are often referred to as 'blow ins' but if willing to accept the hospitality extended they can very quickly settle and be at home in the town.

The warmth and kindness we experienced changed my attitudes completely. I am very grateful for my 12 years in the town.



Newry Town Hall straddles the Clanrye river and acts as a bridge joining County Down and County Armagh. It reminds me of the bridges I'm glad I crossed.



Candlelit vigils

During my time in Newry I became involved with the local Pax Christi group who, when someone was killed through the violence, would organise a candlelit procession to the location they were killed. I'd never been involved in anything like that before and it was an important experience. Those processions took me across cultural and religious boundaries I might never otherwise have crossed.

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