

MEASURING AND VISUALISING LABOUR MARKET & COMMUNITY SEGREGATION IN BELFAST

Background

The report, funded through the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), is the culmination of a research project by Dr Peter Shirlow, Dr Brendan Murtagh, Dr Victor Mesev and Miss Amanda McMullan of the University of Ulster. The study pilots a methodology for generating an updateable geographic data set to measure and monitor the impact of segregation - in this case there were two distinct strands to the study, firstly an exploration of employment in the Belfast area and secondly the daily activities of residents of the Short Strand / Ballymacarrett areas of Belfast.

The project explores how segregation impinges upon the daily activities of Protestant and Catholic communities, especially in relation to how it affects their search for employment. The two communities studied were working class Protestant and Catholic communities situated in close proximity to one another i.e. near "peacelines" or "interface areas".

Report

The research included two strands. The first strand involved the collection of information from 13 employers in and around the Belfast Urban Area on the demographics of their workforce and also job applicants, where they lived and their socio-economic background. The second strand consisted of interviews with 100 households from both the Short Strand and the Ballymacarrett areas, collecting information on where they shopped, socialised, pursued leisure activities and accessed services. For each of these studies a Geographic Information System was used to map population movement.

The study was designed to create an updateable Community Relations measure that may have the potential to be transferred to other areas and which could inform policy at a local level.

Recommendations

Among the key recommendations of the research: -

- There is a need for a policy approach which recognises indigenous employment needs within deprived areas and which also seeks to connect local people to job opportunities safely and efficiently;
- A more safe and less expensive public transport system would not only connect deprived areas to places of employment growth but also to other services such as shopping and leisure facilities;
- The research methodology should be revisited in the future as it represents a behavioural and quantifiable measure related to community relations issues.

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